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MEDITATIONS AND DISCOURSES

ON

THE SUBLIME TRUTHS

AND

IMPORTANT DUTIES OF CHRISTIANITY:

BEING A POSTHUMOUS WORK OF

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MORAL DISCOURSES

ON THE

SUBLIME TRUTHS AND IMPORTANT DUTIES

OF

CHRISTIANITY.

DISCOURSE XXXIII.

AGAINST A FEAR OF CONFESSION.

1. The confession of sin is a powerful remedy, the best means to procure necessary advice, the greatest comfort of the mind, and, by God's appointment, the indispensable condition for a pardon. It is, in the first place, the grand remedy of sin. Prayer, fasting, and other mortifications are great and necessary means to free us from that evil. But of all others, confession is the shortest, the most easy, and the most powerful for this effect, as the most skilful directors agree and experience makes manifest; for nothing so much weakens the power, which the devil had acquired over a soul by sin, as an humble declaration of it in a penitent confession; and, on the other side, nothing so much strengthens the soul, and repairs her lost forces. Hence the devil fears nothing so much as to be discovered, being assured that he shall remain in the quiet possession of his prey as long as he can remain concealed. He, therefore, employs all his stratagems to withhold a soul in a state of sin from the confession of her guilt, the humiliation of which discovery he often is not able to withstand. It always wounds and weakens him, and sometimes alone suffices entirely to vanquish him and put him to flight. How many souls have found themselves at once freed by it from the most troublesome and dangerous temptations, which had obstinately resisted all other remedies? Cassian tells us, Coll. 2, c. 11, of a certain young monk tempted to steal meat, to eat before the time of

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refection in his monastery, who, by the advice of his abbot, Serapion, confessing his weakness, found himself suddenly delivered from that annoyance. See the like examples in St. John Climacus, Gr. 4.

2. Holy confession is also a voluntary humiliation, to which the guilty soul condemns herself by her own free choice; it is one of the principal, yet the shortest and easiest actions of exterior penance; a great and cheap means of satisfaction and atonement for sin; a complete victory over pride and self-love, and over the devil and his artifices. St. Gregory the Great says of it (Mor. l. 22, n. 34, c. 15, t. 1, p. 714): "On account of the shame, it is often a greater conflict to confess sins committed than not to fall into them; and, although it be a greater courage to avoid a fault, the confession of it is an exercise of a greater humility." God, who is a lover of the humble, is extremely pleased with this humiliation. He accepts it, therefore, as a most agreeable sacrifice of expiation, and rewards it with his strongest healing graces, permitting the proud concealer of his guilt to wallow in his mire.

3. This confession is made to one, who will be full of compassion for our miseries, and will weep with us for them, will teach us the methods of conquering them, and prescribe the most proper remedies against them, who will, by his counsel, advice, and prayers, labour jointly with us to remove all the impediments of our spiritual progress, and to promote our good, and our easier and more perfect advancement in virtue. Our body is moved and governed by the soul; nor is our soul to be governed by itself, but by the Spirit of God. Its own lights are clouded, as to itself, by its passions, and by a secret fund of pride and self-love, which no one can be so perfectly freed from, as to be an impartial searcher and judge of the motions of his own heart, in which he would of himself often palliate and excuse what is criminal, mistake passions for virtues, and the illusions of the enemy, who often transforms himself into an angel of light, for inspirations of the Holy Ghost and the will of God. But if he humbly distrust himself, and lays open his interior to be governed by a spiritual director, he will be out of all such danger, and will be wonderfully enlightened and assisted by God in choosing and walking in the true paths of virtue without stumbling. He will learn from him to discover the devil's most subtle arts and wiles; will be instructed in the dangerous occasions of sin, and in the means of flying them; will be animated and encouraged under dejections; excited and spurred under sloth, and taught the whole art of his spiritual

warfare, and assisted every way in the safe paths to his heavenly country.

4. A good use of confession is likewise a practice most comfortable to our souls, as by it we have the incredible advantage of the advice and assistance of a faithful disinterested friend, and a sure guide given us by God himself. Every body knows, particularly those who have most experienced it, how great a treasure and comfort it is, in temporal affairs of great importance and difficulty, to find a faithful, close, and able friend to advise with. The affair of salvation is, beyond all comparison, the most important, the most intricate, the most dangerous of all concerns; and in it we meet with continual scruples, fears, and perils. What a comfort then must it be to a soul, fearful to offend God and lose herself eternally, to be provided with such a friend as cannot be found in any temporal affairs, by whose advice she can safely resolve all her doubts, and remove her perplexities; whose entire secrecy she can absolutely depend upon; to whom she can with confidence disclose all her misfortunes and all her fears, and by whose mouth God assures her, that it is he who speaks to her. Of this an ingenious author, who has been taken by some for the great St. Augustin, l. de Amico, c. 4, writes thus: "What an happiness, what a security, what a pleasure is it to have one, with whom you can as freely discourse concerning your most private motions as you can consider them yourself within your own breast, to whom you are not afraid to confess, if you have offended; to whom you are not ashamed to discover anything of your spiritual progress; to whom you can commit all the secrets of your heart? What can be more comfortable than closely to unite an able friend's soul with our own, and to make but one of two; so that neither shame, nor flattery, nor deceit can be feared or suspected? 'A friend is the remedy of life,' says the Wise Man, Eccl. vi. 16. There can be no stronger or more powerful remedy to all our wounds, or help in all our wants, than to have one to relieve us with compassion in every difficulty, to assist us with congratulation in every advantage; so that, joining his shoulders, he bears all my burthens with me, and bears his own injuries lighter than mine."

5. It is also a great comfort to procure ease of mind and conscience, the effect of confession. St. Gregory the Great observes, Mor. l. 7, c. ult., that persons, who conceal their griefs within themselves, suffer more severely from them; for they are allayed by being led out. Sores are painful as long as the abscess remains

covered, but grow easy when they are opened. Sin is, as it were, a spiritual imposthume, which never ceases to fret and torture till it be laid open; but the lancet has no sooner let out the corruption, with which it was swollen, than the sweetest ease is immediately felt. The wound of conscience continues to torment more and more, the longer it is smothered; but, the sharper its pain, the greater pleasure will it be to be delivered from it, by showing it to the physician, who will not fail to effect the cure.

In troublesome scruples, disquietudes, or temptations, this same means is of great relief. St. Francis of Sales observes upon this head, that the wholesome counsel of St. Lewis to his son was: If you have trouble in your heart, tell it presently to your confessor or some friend, and you will bear the grief very easily by the comfort he shall give you. This experience teaches, to the incredible comfort and help of pious souls.

6. Confession, moreover, is the necessary condition to obtain a pardon; so indispensable in case of mortal sin, that nothing can exempt from its obligation, but an impossibility, in which case the sincere desire of complying with this precept is requisite. Let a sinner multiply his fasts, his alms, and his prayers; let him travel over the world in sackcloth and ashes, and in the conversion of nations; nothing will prevail with God, unless he satisfy this his absolute precept of confessing and submitting his guilt to the tribunal of the Church. Ah! if confession should seem severe to a soul not accustomed to its sweetness, let her represent to herself hell and a miserable eternity; and all conditions of a pardon will appear light, and even pleasant. But could the mercy of God have insisted upon less? In temporal courts how cheaply would a criminal think he purchased his life, if he could save it, even by publicly acknowledging his guilt with protestations of sorrow? God requires only that the sinner confess under the greatest secrecy, with dispositions of repentance. He prescribes only this condition, in itself the most easy, the most comfortable, and the most advantageous possible; such a one as that we ought to praise the goodness of God without ceasing, for furnishing us with the means of practising it under so secure and inviolable a seal. "I have frequently admonished you," says St. Cæsarius, "and I again and again admonish you, that whosoever has suffered shipwreck under the storm of his passions and lusts, quickly do lay hold on confession as the plank to save his broken vessel. He must loudly lament himself dead to God, and weep over his lost soul."—Serm. 61, App. St. Aug. 260, t. 5, p. 426.

7. A soul which, lying under pressing spiritual evils and dangers, conceals her misery out of fear or shame, and shuns or defers them to her physician by an open confession, may be said to be spiritually dumb. In corporal possession by evil spirits that is the most cruel and dangerous, in which the fiend has so far made himself master as to have seized on the very organs of the voice, so that the unhappy person is not able to speak or to give an answer, like the dumb demoniac in the Gospel. Luke, xi. 13. So it is in the spiritual possessions of a soul. If the enemy has obtained so absolute an empire over her as to deprive her of the spiritual use of her speech, by inspiring her with a horror and fear of confession, he holds her securely and peaceably in his possession, and fears not being disturbed. For a man to be in a state of mortal sin and a child of hell is a misfortune so frightful, that no tears can sufficiently bewail it, no tongue express, nor finite understanding conceive it. But if he be so far captivated by the devil, as wilfully to suffer him to exercise his tyranny over his voice, the only means of seeking relief left him is something more horrible, in some degree, than the state of damnation itself. For, whereas it is God who refuses the means of reconciliation to the damned soul, the dumb sinner, by a wilful obstinacy, deprives himself of the most powerful means of pardon, which the mercy of God offers him, nay presses upon him; yet by his criminal contempt and abuse of it, he adds, every hour that he lives, to the enormous increase of his guilt, and to the treasure of wrath.

8. What are the artifices, by which the devil studies to give sinners a dread of confession? Chiefly these four: a fear of the trouble of a careful confession; an apprehension of severe penances; an unwillingness to renounce some favourite passion; and a base shame of confessing. As to the first, the difficulties of confession are chiefly imaginary. It appears frightful at a distance to those who are unacquainted with it; but, when they approach, they will find it surprisingly easy and comfortable. Confession, indeed, requires care and earnest application; but can a reconciliation with God be hoped for, unless it be sued for with earnestness? Men who are so eager and laborious in their temporal concerns, who count fatigues in them as pleasures, are afraid of the least pains for so great a good. This can arise only from their sloth and supine indifference in the affair of their salvation. Let them seriously seek it, and they will never look upon the pains of making a good confession as a hard task.

9. Some are afraid of satisfaction and a severe penance. Alas!

a delay will increase their guilt, and the debts, which must be satisfied here or hereafter. What senseless madness to refuse the tribunal of mercy, to choose that of rigour and justice! not remembering that it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Heb. x. Let such persons consider the malice of sin, what Christ suffered to expiate it, what penances were enjoined in the primitive ages, compared with the present discipline of the Church, &c. But the minister of the sacrament will use all possible condescension to their weakness; he will remit the greater part to their own free choice and endeavours, or at least will defer it till they by fervour are better able to bear it, or through a zealous charity will, by his own prayers and mortifications, labour to supply what their weakness thinks too heavy, in imitation of St. Francis Xavier. Never, then, let this foolish, imaginary fear and base sloth deter sinners from approaching the sacrament of mercy.

10. In some, this dread of confession arises from a secret unwillingness to abandon some darling passion, or some favourite occasion of sin, of being obliged to restore unjust acquisitions, to pardon enemies, or the like; that is to say, they are afraid of confession, because they are unwilling to renounce sin, and consequently shun that, which would compel them to break their chains. How criminal is it thus openly to prefer the slavery of the devil to the sweets and advantages of the service of God! What an affront do such souls offer to the blood of Christ! What a base and ungrateful return is this to God's most merciful calls! What a contempt of the holy sacrament! Let such souls consider the just judgments which fall on presumptuous abuses of grace, and on impenitent and delaying sinners. Ah! before they are yet overtaken by them, let them, without further delay, lay open their wounds to their physician. By the grace which attends humble confession, by their examen and good resolutions, and by the prayers, advice, and encouragement of God's ministers, they will find their difficulties vanished, their clouds scattered, themselves wonderfully enlightened and strengthened, and what they before feared now become their joy and their happiness. But the more ordinary engine, by which the devil draws sinners from confession, is a senseless shame, which makes some fly the sacrament, and others, with greater impiety, hypocritically approach it, sacrilegiously concealing part of their guilt.

This shall be the subject of our next discourse.

DISCOURSE XXXIV.

AGAINST THE SHAME OF CONFESSING OUR SINS.

1. The shame of confessing our sins is most base, criminal, and senseless; for it draws on certain, eternal, and real confusion; it is the shame of what is glorious and honourable; nor is this confession a publication of sins, being made under the most inviolable seal of secrecy only to Christ and his minister, our charitable parent and physician. It is a clear article of our faith, that we must either confess our sins privately as penitents before God's minister upon earth, or give up all hopes of our ever obtaining pardon for them; we must either be our own voluntary accusers, discovering them in an honourable and glorious repentance under the seal of confession, or one day see them laid open in their full deformity before the universe, to our eternal confusion. Is it not better voluntarily to undergo the confusion of our sin, than bear the shame of the sentence of eternal reprobation; for, as St. Augustin says,* "If you will not confess, you will be condemned confessed. You fear to confess, who by not confessing cannot be hid. You will be condemned silent, who could be delivered by confessing." And St. Pacian thus addresses himself to such bashful sinners, impudent to offend, but ashamed to repent: "Shall the sinner fear? Shall he be ashamed to purchase eternal life by present confusion? Will he withdraw back his sore wounds from God, who offers his healing hand?"—Parænes. ad Pœn. Is it not better to blush before one man, under the strictest laws of secrecy, than at the last day, in the sight of heaven and earth, be covered then with the justest and most insupportable shame and reproach? Confusion is the just punishment of sin; if it be any to confess, is not this to be cheerfully undergone as most deserved, and as small and nothing in comparison of the eternal and insupportable confusion in hell, which is due to sin? Is it not to be suffered as a remedy of so great an evil? Tertullian observes, that this is a more irrational and base shame than if a patient should choose rather to perish than discover some shameful wound in his body to the physician. He says, also, considering

* "Si non confessus lates, confessus damnaberis. Times confiteri, qui non confitendo esse non potes occultus: damnaberis tacitus, qui posses liberari confessus."—In Ps. 66, t. 3, p. 660.

that this shame does not hide them from their judge and God: "The concealment of their sin promises them a great advantage indeed, as if we could also hide it from God as we did from men. Is it better to lurk condemned than to be publicly absolved?"—De Pœnit., c. 10.

2. This shame will appear the more groundless, if we consider that confession is glorious and honourable. Almighty God, as St. Chrysostom remarks, annexed shame to sin that it might be a fence and barrier against it; but the devil inverts the order of things, and labours to inspire an impudent boldness to sin, and a shame of repentance, than which nothing can be more impious or more senseless. As it is most base and shameful to sin, so is it most glorious and worthy of the greatest praise to repent and confess. "There is a confusion bringing glory and grace."—Eccl. iv. 26. This confession is the complete victory and triumph over the devil; it is a virtue, and most glorious in the sight of God and his whole court, which it fills with joy and exultation. "There shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance."—Luke, xv. 10. The good shepherd himself exults for the recovery of his lost sheep; the tender father invites all his friends, and celebrates a festival, upon the return of his prodigal son. Christ's minister on earth enters into some degree of share in the joy of his divine Master, and mingles his tears of joy with the penitential tears of the returning sinner, contemplating, at every word of his humble accusation of himself, the devils vanquished and flying from his heart. This confession rescues him from the tyranny of sin, cleanses and beautifies his soul, and is the date of his glory and happiness, by making him begin to live to God.

But it seems a confusion to confess a man's secret crimes. It is true, if the sinner do it to glory in them, or to persevere in their malice; but here he confesses them, covered with confusion at their sight, and filled with a holy detestation of them; he confesses them only to destroy and efface them. They, therefore, subsist no more. A sinner indeed he was; but, by his repentance, his sins are blotted out, and their stains quite washed away; he is now no longer the same man, being, by a happy transformation, gloriously changed by this very confession. Who does not admire David, or Mary Magdalen, in their repentance? What they had been is no more; we consider all that no more in them; but only what they now are, and what the glory, the honour, the merit, and eternal advantage of their penance are? Nay,

the greater the crimes and miseries of sinners had been, the greater are the triumph and joy of their deliverance to all lovers of God and of souls. Their confession and repentance will shine with incomparable lustre at the last day and to eternity, as a great virtue and crown in holy penitents; their sins will appear no more except as effaced. In their stead, glorious penance will appear as a precious embroidery and tissue, formed from the blood of Christ, adorning the souls; as a stain on a garment, covered over with a jewel or embroidery much richer than the stuff, becomes an ornament. "Ah! be ashamed to commit sin; but who can be ashamed of that work, by which he is made just? Who can be ashamed to confess his sins to efface them? For does God command you to confess your sins that he may punish you? No; but to blot them out. Not as in earthly tribunals, in which confession is followed by punishment;" exclaims St. Chrysostom, Hom. quod non sit in gratiam concion., t. 2, p. 663.

3. But to whom are we commanded to confess our sins? Not in a theatre, or in public; not to be divulged or rebuked; but by the priest to God, who knows them before, who will not reproach us for them, or receive us with harshness or severity; to him who is the lover of penitent souls? "Why do I fear to confess?" says St. Ambrose? "Why do I fear to tell my sins? Why do I apprehend any disgrace or reproach by declaring them before him, whose judgments are sweet? What would be severe in others is sweet in Christ, because he is all sweetness and mildness."—In Ps. 128, Octon. 5, p. 1159. We indeed confess to the priest, but only as God's minister and vicegerent in his name; this also under the strictest ties of secrecy, so that he can never make use of any knowledge of sin, or any circumstance ever so small, acquired from sacramental confession, on any account whatsoever, unless to pray privately for the penitent, or study for his advantage. The least revelation by word or sign, directly or indirectly, would be a most heinous crime, first, against the law of nature, as everything in confession is spoken under the tie of the strictest natural secret; secondly, against the divine law, which, by instituting the law of confession, commanded most inviolably this severe entire secrecy, without which the precept of confessing is annulled, and penitents deterred from the use, and even exempted from the obligation of it; for no one is bound to confess his sin, if he cannot do it without a hazard of its being revealed, as divines agree.* Thirdly, against the laws of the

* See Suar in 3 Disp. 23, Sect. 2.

Church, which by the severest canons condemn any priest guilty of it to be deposed and shut up for life. The civil courts in Catholic countries condemn him to death; and we read of one burned at Toulouse for that crime.* Such a disclosure, therefore, would be a manifold grievous sin against the fidelity of a natural secret, against justice, charity, and obedience to the canons of the Church, and a dreadful sacrilege against the divine law and institution of this sacrament, which it tends to make void, and to deprive the Church of. This is a more heinous sin than any which the penitent could have committed, says Pope Innocent III., Serm. 3. de Con., more enormous than that of the traitor Judas, says St. Anthony of Padua, Serm. 2. in Dom. 1, Quadr. Hence a priest cannot make any use of confessional knowledge, in excluding unworthy persons from holy orders or offices; nor in the government of his house such use could never be suspected; for such a principle would, at least, make the sacrament odious and impracticable;† nor in any way to consult his own indemnity or secure his life; nor even to preserve the public. Hence it was not lawful (as reported) for F. Garnet to disclose the treason, which had been discovered to him only in sacramental confession, though he was bound by all means to draw the accomplices from it, and to refuse them absolution, even by obliging them to impeach any obstinate associates, whom they could not avert by other means. When Henry IV. of France would compel the Jesuits to subscribe a declaration, that in cases of high treason a confessor could, and consequently was obliged to make a disclosure, Father Coton convinced that prince that such a practice would even hurt the State; for, as no one would confess such things, priests could never avert them by dissuasion and admonitions. Nor can any dispensation be granted by any authority whatsoever, in any case possible, to allow such a revelation. Not only the priest is bound by this seal of secrecy, but also an interpreter of another's confession, or whoever, by being too near, should overhear any part of it, or one to whom it should be related by others. Even a person who has been at confession, if he went privately to conceal it, though not otherwise, falls under the seal.‡ A written confession, to help the memory, cannot be read or revealed, without a grievous mortal sin, as it is a violation of a strict secret; many divines even think

* Raymondus Hist., n. 13, p. 604, t. 17.

† See the Definitions of Clement VIII., anno 1594, and of Innocent XI., anno 1682.

‡ Nesseu La Croix, &c.

it a violation of the sacramental seal. Though, for fear of scandals and accidents, no penitent ought to keep such written confessions long by him, or leave them exposed; as they might be an occasion of many sins and evil consequences.* Although the penitent is not, on his side, bound by this sacramental seal, yet he ought to conceal, as a natural secret, whatsoever his director has, with the confidence of a secret, said to him; as also the penance enjoined him, which, if discovered, would often give scandal, create suspicions, or other evils. By such sacred barriers has Christ secured the inviolable secret of confession, that this most comfortable and profitable means of satisfaction might be made easy to sinners; and he watches over the conservation of its seal with a singular providence. Indeed, the most abandoned apostate would still be too jealous of his own reputation to break it, and, were he so impious, certainly he could deserve no credit with any one. But we have no such example. "It is unheard of that sins heard by confession should be divulged, lest others should be deterred from confessing, and all hope of the recovery of their faith should be cut off," says St. John Climachus, Ep. ad Pastor, c. 13. God would even, to guard his sacrament, give his minister more easily the courage of St. John Nepomucen, the martyr of this seal, who chose rather to die than to violate it at the command of an enraged tyrant. No; the pious confessor will be so scrupulously careful as to this most indispensable precept, that what he hears or sees otherwise he will endeavour to be blind and dumb in, lest the sacramental knowledge should inadvertently insinuate itself; so that he may say with a celebrated ancient pastor, "What I know by confession, I know less than what I do not know at all."†

4. What must increase our confidence in confession is, that we declare our sins to a man encompassed with weakness like ourselves, to one who is our faithful and charitable friend, and our tender father. We confess not to a cherub or a seraph, to one impeccable and unacquainted with the infirmities of our nature, but to a man and a sinner like ourselves, surrounded with the same dangers with us, and who, by the experience of his own frailty, cannot but have compassion on those who are ignorant, and because he himself also is encompassed with infirmity. Heb. v. 2. We confess to one who acknowledges himself to be also a sinner, and places his own hopes in this plank of confession;

* Of which M. Brainvilliers at Paris, anno 1676, was an unjust example.

† "Quæ per confessionem scio minus scio quam quæ nescio."—St. Aug. Serm. 30. ad Fratr. in Eremo, t. 6, App. p. 336.

who, perhaps, owns himself to be a greater sinner than we are, or at least knows that he lives in the same dangers, and is preserved from worse evils only by the grace of God, and regards himself always as weaker, and more ungrateful and unworthy than we are; consequently, who cannot look upon us with eyes of contempt and aversion, but with tenderness, compassion, and affection. He knows that Christ, his prince and his model, made it his delight to converse with and to receive sinners, and that he spilt his blood only to save them. He knows that David and the publican were saints in a moment; the chief pastor, St. Peter, was permitted to fall, to teach all other shepherds of souls to treat repenting sinners with mildness, considering that they themselves might be likewise tempted and fall. Who can be ashamed to confess penitently his sins amongst sinners and to sinners? "Are you then afraid to do this in the church—where we ought only to be ashamed not to confess, as we are all sinners; where he is the more commendable who is the more humble; he the more just, who is the meaner in his own eyes?" says St. Ambrose, l. 2. de Pœnit., c. 10. Another devout author cries out: "He who hears your sins is a sinner like you, and perhaps a greater: he is a man differing in nothing from me. Why, then, do you fear, O sinner! to confess to man and a sinner? Confess, O my brethren! defer it not. Hasten to the secret harvest of confession. This is the salvation of souls, the dissipatress of vice, the restorer of virtues, the conqueror of devils, the terror of hell, the confidence of the churches, the safety, leader, staff, light, and hope of all faithful. O holy and admirable confession! Thou shuttest hell's gates and openest those of paradise. O confession, life of the just, glory of sinners! Thou art indispensably necessary to the sinner, and the just will also embrace and frequent thee; and nothing shall remain in judgment which shall have been perfectly cleansed by confession."—St. Aug. Serm. 30. ad Fr. in Eremo, t. 6, App. p. 336.

5. A confessor is also, by his office and by his charity, our close and faithful friend given to us by God, to whom our souls cannot but be most dear. The very confidence we repose in him, whereby we discover to him all the secrets of our souls, which we would not disclose to a brother or parent, must particularly engage his tenderness and affection for us. And the deeper our wounds, the greater our miseries and dangers have been, the greater will be his compassion, the more fervent his tears to God for us; the more feeling his affection towards us, and the greater his joy for our deliverance; in the same manner as parents are more affected

towards a son, whom they have seen in great danger. Gerson writes thus upon this subject: "Some will, perhaps, fear I shall feel in my heart certain emotions of anger, disdain, or aversion from his confession. Nothing less. I shall rather love him more tenderly as my dearest son. I feel in my heart that I am more affected towards those whom I see drawn out of great evils and dangers than towards those who were less wounded. Nor should I ever entertain any the least sentiments of hatred and revenge for the confession of any crime whatsoever, were it even the death of my own parent."—L. de Parvulis Tract. ad Christ., p. 35. These are merely the dispositions of every pious confessor towards his penitents. Those, whose dangers are greater, discover a greater confidence in him by their confession, and by their miseries awaken his tenderness more strongly.

He is, moreover, their spiritual father, and they are his joy, his glory, and his crown. Those alone who understand how far the bands of the spirit exceed the strictest alliances of the flesh, can be sensible what are the feelings of a zealous and charitable pastor towards his children in Christ, and with what tenderness and regard in his heart he treats them under all their evils. Whence St. Gregory of Nyssa, or rather, as Photius attests, his contemporary St. Asterius of Amasa, in his homily against those who judge harshly, p. 619, speaks thus: "Place a greater confidence in the priest, thy parent in God, than in those who are thy corporal parents. Discover to him boldly thy secrets. Disclose the most occult thoughts of thy soul, as hidden wounds to the physician. He will have a regard both for thy honour and for thy health. Parents are more moved at the disgrace of their children than the children themselves."

6. As the devil deters some from confession by a foolish shame, so, by the same stratagem, he sometimes draws others into an evil still far more grievous, which is to conceal or disguise some mortal sin or aggravating circumstances in their confession. This is a sacrilege of the first rate, and a base ingratitude; a lying to the Holy Ghost, and transgressing the most sacred command of Christ; a shameful hypocrisy, and a most extravagant folly. We measure the enormity of a sacrilege by the holiness of the thing abused by it; for, the more sacred this is, and the higher degree of sanctity and grace it contains, so much the more grievous is a sacrilegious profanation of it. Now, the sacraments of the New Law are the most holy of all the mysteries of our divine religion, as they are the proper vessels of the most precious blood of Christ,

and the instruments by which its merits and fruits are communicated to us; therefore, an abuse of them is a direct and most horrible profanation of the adorable blood of Christ, and the infinite price of our redemption, and an enormous injury done to religion, the most holy mysteries of which are thus contumeliously trampled upon.

The blessed Eucharist, being the most sacred of the sacraments, an unworthy communion is to be deemed the greatest of these sacrileges; yet the sacrament of penance being the richest and most powerful effort of the divine mercy for the remission of sins, which was the principal object of Christ's passion, a contempt of it is a sacrilege of a particular malice, ruining directly the ends of Christ's sufferings. How pathetically may we consider our sweetest Redeemer expostulating with such an ungrateful soul upon the designs of his infinite mercy, and the great end of his labours, sweats, torments, and blood made void and wilfully profaned by it! Is it possible that any one could be knowingly capable of such a sacrilege? could repay such infinite goodness with so black an ingratitude? could be so impious as to provoke God by the very means instituted to appease him, and at the very time he is pretending to atone for past sins?

7. This crime is not only a sacrilege, it is also a lie to the Holy Ghost. All lying is detested by all men for its baseness; and even liars themselves can never bear that reproach, which is looked upon as the highest affront, and never to be borne. It is infinitely more hateful to God, as it is contrary to his very essence, which is "truth;" but, to lie to God's minister, sitting and acting in his name and authority, is to lie to God himself. Thus Ananias and Saphira, lying to St. Peter, as his minister and vicar, are said to have lied to the Divine Majesty in person. "Why hath Satan tempted thy heart that thou shouldst lie to the Holy Ghost? Thou hast not lied to men, but to God."—Acts, v. 3, 4. For which both were struck dead at the apostle's feet, to serve as an example of terror to all succeeding ages, and to show the enormity of seeking to impose upon God in his vicegerents. Yet their lie was in a thing of much less moment than is the matter of his sacrament,* it having been relative only to an alms, which, or at least the obligation of it, was of their own free choice. Here it is told in the act of a most holy sacrament, in the most solemn contract which a creature can make with his God, and with a violation of his most express and severe precept.

* Unless, with some, we believe that this was in sacramental confession.—Ed.

He commands the confession to be sincere and entire. The sinner, by presenting himself in the sacred tribunal, declares he will make such a confession, and lay open his whole guilt to God's minister, in order to obtain a pardon by fulfilling the conditions which it has pleased God in his mercy to prescribe; yet he disguises his guilt by a shameless lie against his own protestations, and against God's express command. Did Christ sit as our judge visible before us, could any sinner have the boldness to lie to his face? To lie in confession, is to lie to him in his minister and representative. St. Ambrose observes (l. de Parad., c. 14, p. 166), that Cain seems to have sinned more grievously by denying his crime to God by a lie, saying, "I know not," than he had by the murder of his brother; and, therefore, as he sought to conceal his guilt, the devil was constituted his accuser, with the voice of his own conscience, and he was justly excluded from the grace of pardon; but a lie told in the sacrament seems to exceed the malice of Cain, as it is delivered in a more sacred and solemn manner, and is an abuse of the very means of pardon, which it employs to insult God with.

8. This lie in confession is, moreover, an act of the basest hypocrisy, as its object is to cover impenitence and sin by the most holy sacrament. The sinner boldly appears in the sacred tribunal as an humble, sincere penitent, under the cloak of a feigned humility, and assumes the air and words of innocence and simplicity only to impose upon God's minister, and counterfeit the saint in his eyes, far more worthy to be crushed with thunderbolts, or struck dead at his feet, than were Ananias and Saphira; but his crime deserves to be reserved for much greater punishment; for he deceives his judge, whom he acknowledges as representing God himself, and annuls his sacred sentence and judgment.

9. This proceeding is the most extravagant madness and folly, as well as impiety. For what is the sinner ashamed of? Is it not of having been what St. Peter, what David were? Let him consider St. Austin, Magdalen, and all other penitent saints. When he sees them publish their sins, can he be still afraid of imitating their example? David confesses his sin publicly, and do not you acknowledge yours?" exclaims St. Ambrose in Ps. 118, Octon. 5, t. 1, p. 1159. Job, the holy Job, would not conceal his iniquity in his bosom, ch. 31, and a wretched sinner is afraid of being ranked amongst penitents, who ought only to blush at his pride. But whilst he thus imposes upon his confessor, can he impose upon God? That is what he does not so

much as flatter himself with. "If I refused to confess to thee, O Lord! to whose eyes the abyss of man's conscience is naked, what would be hidden in me from thee? For I should hide thee from me, not myself from thee."*

He flies from the knowledge of the priest, indeed; but a knowledge which is a more inviolable secret than even secrecy itself, and which can procure him the prayers, wholesome advice, and assistance of a tender, charitable friend and parent, who says: "My little children, of whom I am in labour again, until Christ be formed in you"—Gal. v. 19; a comfort and advantage which we seek in all our pains and concerns of weight.

10. Yet, by this groundless shame, and most accursed concealment, he stops the sentence of pardon which God was ready and earnestly desirous to pronounce, and changes it into a sentence of condemnation. He exposes his salvation to the utmost danger, and plunges himself into most inextricable difficulties, both as to the time to come and for the present. As to the time to come; for this shame of confessing will increase and be strengthened by habit; also, by the additional burden of this sacrilege, and other crimes, which must be all confessed at last, or no salvation can be hoped for. What folly to refuse doing that now, with a design of certainly doing it hereafter, with so many aggravating difficulties, and with the utmost hazard of never doing it at all, at least as it ought to be done.

11. It is attended also with present difficulties and evils; for, besides the multiplication of most grievous sins, what must be the anxiety, inward torture, and perplexity of such a sinner? He knows certainly that he must at last confess this whole load of his guilt, or perish eternally without resource! Yet the imaginary horror of confessing fills him with alarms and frights, little short of the agonies with which the perpetual consciousness of his guilt, and the danger of his eternity, never cease to disturb and tear his poor soul. Whatever he does, wheresoever he goes, these always pursue him; no company, pleasures, or occupations can silence or calm them. The more he seeks to dissipate his mind, the deeper will the thorn be struck in, and, by length of time, it but widens the wound, and increases his pain and distemper. Oh! how speedily might he get rid of it. He has only to discover it to the surgeon, and it will be plucked out without pain;

* "Te enim mihi absconderem, non me tibi," says St. Augustin, Confess., l. 10, c. 2.

it is merely a silly, imaginary fear, that deters him from it. St. Francis Xavier met a Portuguese in the Indies who could not be induced to go to confession; the saint tenderly inquiring the cause of his pain, he named a sin, which he said he never could confess; St. Francis told him that, as he had already mentioned it, that difficulty was over; upon which the man was restored to tranquillity of mind, perceiving the illusion of those phantoms, which had represented confession in such false colours. We read of a certain person of quality, who, having committed a grievous sin, thinking he could never resolve in himself to confess it, left nothing undone to make himself forget it. With this view, he abandoned himself to drinking, and other excesses and pleasures, hoping that the multitude of his sins would at last blot it out of his memory, but in vain; that crime always remained the uppermost in his thoughts. He then had recourse to travelling, ran over many countries, and engaged himself in the greatest variety of affairs. All this being to no effect, he addicted himself to mathematics and other studies which particularly require attention. This expedient being also tried in vain, he bethought himself of another, which was to give large alms, practise the greatest mortifications, fasts, hair-shirts, disciplines, &c., but with no more success than he had employed the other means. Still, not able to think of confessing it, he was at last reduced to despair, and resolved to hang himself. In this anxiety he met with a priest, who, by his discourse, perceived that he laboured under great uneasiness of mind, and learning the cause, and indirectly insinuating himself into his favour, he named several enormous sins, asking the man if his pain were not this or that. At last, at the name of one, the nobleman cried out: "That is it, but I can never confess it." The priest told him that difficulty was over; he had but to confess other sins to him along with this. The unfortunate man, surprised to find his phantoms of fear all vanished, did so, and recovered immediately inconceivable calm, joy, and peace of mind.

Sin is a load and torture to the soul, till she is eased of it by confession. Origen uses this comparison: "The divine Scripture teaches that we are not to conceal sin within ourselves. As they who have their stomachs overcharged, or filled with bad humours, are eased and freed from the dangerous consequences by a vomit, so those who, having sinned, retain its venom within themselves, suffer its tortures, and are almost suffocated by it; but if a man become his own accuser, and confesses his sin, he throws up the

cause of his disease, and is relieved."—Origen, Hom. 2. in Ps. 37, p. 295. St. Augustin expresses the comfort which confession gives to a wounded conscience in these words: "You are sorrowful before you confess; having confessed, rejoice, you shall be healed; your conscience had gathered corruption; the imposthume was formed and swollen, it tormented you, and allowed you no rest. The physician applies fomentations of words, and sometimes cuts. You feel his hand. Confess; let all the corruption run, and be poured out in confession. Now exult, now rejoice, what remains will be easily healed."—St. Aug. in Ps. 66, n. 7, p. 661.

If, then, I find myself tempted to shame in confessing anything, I will raise my heart to God, earnestly imploring his assistance and strength; and without hesitation, deliberation, or study of any softening words, will boldly accuse myself of that, first of all, together with all its aggravating circumstances and malice, to gain a complete victory over this devil. If I seek to extenuate or excuse it, what a danger of lying to the Holy Ghost! What scruples, what anxieties, what trouble in confessing all again, will not be the consequence!

DISCOURSE XXXV.

ON THE CHOICE OF A CONFESSOR, AND ON A GENERAL CONFESSION.

1. Many reasons show the necessity and advantage of a director in the service of God. The conduct of a man's conscience is, of all things, the most difficult, as in it often the darkness is great, and storms are violent and frequent, so that it requires an extraordinary light and strength. It is, therefore, a high degree of presumption and pride for any man to confide in his own sufficiency herein, without seeking the assistance of the most skilful and experienced guide possible. "Rely not on thy own prudence, says the Holy Ghost."—Prov. ii. 5. "He is called a fool who trusts in his own heart."—Prov. xxviii. 26. "For the way of a fool is right in his eyes, but the wise man hearkens to counsel."—Prov. xii. 15. He, then, who desires to serve God, ought to commit his soul to the conduct of one who will direct him in the right paths of virtue, warn him of his dangers, caution him against the false roads which he is to shun, spur him on when he

walks too slow, and holds him in if he should attempt to run beyond his strength.

Again, no one can judge impartially and securely in his own case. Self-love, pride, and the whole brood of his passions, will often disguise, smother, or misrepresent the truth to his eyes, and no degree of genius, learning, capacity, experience, or virtue can ever secure a man from the imperceptible deceits of their prejudices. Hence, let a person be ever so enlightened, ever so fervent and perfect, if he trust in his own sufficiency, his virtue will be all built on pride and presumption, and the faster he runs, the faster he goes out of his way, like a traveller who has taken a wrong road. Hence the Wise Man lays down this rule: "Thou hast seen a man seem wise to himself, the fool has rather hopes than he."—Prov. xxvi. 12. Gerson commends this saying of an ancient solitary: "If you see any advancing well, but without a guide, though he should already have one foot in heaven, pull him back, for he cannot enter."

2. It is only the grace of God that must be our light and strength in the ways of virtue, in which we are not able to make one true step of ourselves; but, to root up the very seed of pride out of our hearts, God has annexed his grace to our obedience to the direction of others, and his providence has established this rule, that no one should be his own guide, as he hopes for his succours, but submit to the advice of another in all difficulties; for humility and obedience are the two tests of virtue, the only security against illusion, and the means which draw down the benediction of heaven. Hence, St. Augustin vehemently exhorts us to abhor the fatal temptation of following our own lights: "Let us beware," says he, "of those most proud and most dangerous temptations, and rather remember that the apostle Paul, though converted and instructed by a voice, yet was sent to a man, Ananias: 'Go into the city, and there it shall be told thee what thou must do.'—Acts, ix. 7. And Cornelius, the centurion, though an angel assured him his prayers were heard, yet was delivered to St. Peter to be instructed."* We see the most eminent saints, though the most enlightened by God, and the most learned doctors, distrusting their own sentiments, and consulting and following others. This is the surest proof of souls being governed by the Spirit of God, which always inspires this diffidence in themselves.

* "Caveamus tales tentationes superbissimas et periculosissimas," &c.—St. Augustin, Præf. l. de Doctr. Christ., t. 3.

By this they steer securely through the darkness and tempests which hide our road from our own eyes; as Joas walked in the paths of justice for the first forty years, whilst he followed his good director, Joiada, but miserably fell as soon as he would be his own guide. 4 Kings, xii. 2.

3. The first thing necessary in a spiritual life is to seek a good director, as Tobias thus advised his son for his journey: "Seek to thyself some faithful man who may go with thee."—Tob. v. 4. "If there be no comparison to a faithful friend, he who has found him has found a treasure."—Eccl. vi. 14, 15. What an incomparable blessing is a good spiritual guide; a man, to whom we may communicate all our interior! Almighty God is to be earnestly besought to conduct us to such a one, as he sent his angel before his people to protect them, and lead them into his promised land. Exod. xxiii. 20. He is to be chosen, not by human affection, nor one likely to be indulgent to our passions, or to flatter our inclinations; but a man of learning, able to distinguish leprosy and leprosy. Secondly, a man of prudence, not of this world, but of spiritual prudence, to understand a penitent's spiritual state, necessities, remedies, &c. Thirdly, a man of virtue, zeal, great humility, and charity; also of experience of the heart of man, or knowledge of the variety of its passions, infirmities, and movements; and likewise of personal experience in the interior paths of prayer, without which he can never be qualified to instruct or direct safely others in them; consequently he must be himself a man of prayer, and enlightened from God by it; having hence the gift of the discretion of spirits to distinguish that of God and that of the world, and qualified to know what methods of prayer are most proper for each disposition, &c. St. Theresa in her own Life, c. 5, and 13, Alvarez du Par, the devout abbess Gertrude, More, &c., furnish us with examples of how great a hindrance unqualified directors are, even to fervent souls, in their spiritual progress. The great Avila used to say, that not one out of a thousand; St. Francis of Sales said, not one out of ten thousand is truly qualified for this task, which would be dreaded even by the angels, and which St. Gregory calls the art of arts. But it is a great fault to be unreasonable in choosing a confessor, so as not to be content with such a choice as Providence offers us; or with him it sends, if it allow us no choice, provided nothing essential be wanting. Nor is a choice to be made in such a manner as to include a tacit censure or contempt of other confessors. It is a lesson of the Holy Ghost; "subject

not thyself to every man for sin."—Eccl. iv. 31. St. Basil observes, Reg. Brev. 229, 12, 465, that we are to follow the rule, in confessing our sins, which we practise in seeking remedies for our corporal wounds, viz.: to discover them only to the skilful. Origen had inculcated the same important advice, which proves that there was a choice of many confessors in the third age of the Church. Look about very diligently to whom you ought to confess your sins; try first the physician to whom you ought to lay open the cause of your disorder, that he know how to condole; that if he, who has shown himself a learned and tender physician, shall give you any counsel, you execute it. Origen, Hom. 2. in Ps. 37, p. 295. But this care is not to be anxious, nor to exceed the bounds of order and reason. God will supply any minor defects, and be himself our guide in that director he has provided for us, if we are not wanting to ourselves.

4. We are to look upon our confessor as our spiritual father, physician, judge, doctor, guide, and master, and as an angel deputed by God to conduct us to eternal life. We must lay open to him all our wounds and dangers; must ordinarily follow his resolutions in our scruples and doubts; must undertake nothing extraordinary, as in the choice of a state of life, in the practice of any extraordinary mortifications, &c., without his advice, if we hope to obtain God's benediction on our deliberations and endeavours. He will be best able to discover, if anything of self-love, or self-will, or any human passion insinuate itself into our motives or desires. At least, by following direction we shall secure ourselves from all danger of illusion from them, and shall make to God the most agreeable sacrifice of our own judgment. It is a great happiness, if our confessor be one capable of directing us by his own experience in the interior paths and sentiments of a spirit of prayer and of other virtues. In this case, we may most profitably converse with him upon these subjects; but great care is to be taken, that such conversation never descend to the trifling circumstances of actions, or to a detail or history of them; which causes a loss of time, accustoms the heart to minutiæ or idle curiosity, and is apt to fill it with affections and attachments purely human. With persons of a different sex conversations must never be frequent or long on any account; nor with others, if there appear in them any danger of feeding a secret vanity or other passions.

But our deference to the judgment of our confessor is to have its due bounds. In scruples we are entirely to acquiesce in it.

In matters which are more intricate and of greater consequence we ought to see how far we can safely rely upon it. For, though it be a safe rule to the more ignorant, and to those who have not opportunities of better advice, or reasons not to depend upon it, yet it will not be always such to others, nor indeed to any, if it regard essentials, or if it flatter the penitent's passions. St. Theresa says she should not have been excused before God in following such directors as would tell her, that was no sin which was so, because the point was sufficiently clear in itself: c. 5. "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the pit."—Matt. xv. 14.

5. Though the choice of a confessor be free, yet it is an important advice not to change him for another, unless upon sufficient reason and pure motives; also to adhere as much as possible to our ordinary confessor, to whom, by this means, the habitual state and circumstances of our souls will be better known, without which we lose all the advantage of direction; nor will confession be so strong a bridle or check to our passions. There will also be danger of making sacrilegious confessions, as the penitent's circumstances, temptations, and the danger of consent in them cannot be sufficiently known for the confessor to form a true judgment about them. This danger of sacrilege is much greater, if a penitent should seek new confessors on any extraordinary relapse; a base hypocrisy, and a practice severely condemned by divines.

6. A confession is to be reiterated, if it were invalid, which may happen many ways by any essential defect in the confessor, or in the penitent. In the confessor, if he really was no priest; or if a priest, but had not any jurisdiction to hear the penitent: either ordinary, by possessing some charge in the Church, which makes him pastor of a certain flock, as that of rector of a parish; or delegate, granted him by an ordinary pastor, as the bishop. Although regulars, by grants of the Holy See, enjoy a privilege of jurisdiction, and exercise it over their own religious, yet they cannot exercise it in regard to any seculars, unless authorized for this purpose by the bishop, as the Council of Trent has decreed. Pope Benedict XIV., anno 1745, declares expressly, that in the English mission they must receive faculties from the bishop. But in case of a coloured title and public mistake, that a priest had jurisdiction, though he should want it, the Church supplies him with it in favour of the faithful. The confession is also invalid, if the priest did not pronounce the sacramental form of

absolution; if by some distraction or deafness he did not hear or understand some mortal sin, that was confessed: though in this case the penitent will be excused before God, if he never be conscious of such a defect having happened; yet, if at any time hereafter he become apprised of it, he is bound to confess that sin again, as it had not been duly subjected to the keys of the Church.

Confession is invalid through defects in the penitent: First, according to some, if he lay under any excommunication at the time of his absolution, and was not previously absolved from that censure. Secondly, if the penitent had not faith in the mysteries of one God, the author of our supernatural good, and reward; of three equal and co-eternal Persons, and of the incarnation of the Son of God; or if he were ignorant of any of these truths, even by an inculpable ignorance or forgetfulness of his Catechism. Thirdly, if he were guilty of a considerable negligence in the examination of his conscience; of a want of sufficient contrition and true purpose of sinning no more, and of satisfying for his sins; or of concealing any mortal sin or considerable aggravating circumstances in his confession, either directly, wilfully, or out of sloth or negligence. If the omission was inculpable his confession was entire in the sight of God, and the absolution from all his sins, known and unknown, valid and full; but if this sin occur afterwards to his memory, he lies under an obligation of submitting it to the tribunal of the Church, and this before he can receive the blessed Eucharist; which requires greater purity of conscience than the other sacraments, for which being already in the state of grace is esteemed sufficient. In all these cases, the confessions made were null, and are to be entirely repeated, though if the confession be made to the same confessor soon after, so that he remembers in general the other sins confessed, it is sufficient to repeat the confession of those, that were before mentioned, in general terms. A general confession of a person's whole life is necessary and of precept in any of the aforesaid cases, or in a prudent rational danger of them, or at least a confession from the time in which there has been that danger of them, or such a one as may supply the essential defects which are apprehended. And as an examination or contrition cannot but have been generally wanting in those, who have lived remiss and slothful in their preparation for this sacrament, or habitually careless of prayer or other spiritual duties, or in an habitual criminal ignorance of any parts of the Catechism or Christian duties, or of the duties of their

calling, or in a habit of any mortal sin, into which they frequently and easily relapsed after their confessions, to all such a careful general confession is necessary to secure their salvation. It is true, that a subsequent good confession may restore a man to the state of grace, who is not conscious to himself of any former defects; but it cannot when he has reason to know them, because he is then bound to repair them.

7. When there is no precept or necessity of a general confession, it is sometimes very advisable—as to every man once in his life after he is grown up—to remedy any past neglects, to take a review of his whole life, and to bewail all his crimes in the bitterness of his soul, and sometimes also the better to receive proper directions for the best method of repairing past losses, and serving God perfectly for the time to come. It is then proper, when a man first converts himself to fervour in the service of God. We read in St. Ouen's Life of St. Eligius of Noyon, that, being come to man's age, he made a confession of his whole life before a priest. It is often proper, when persons enter upon a state of life, to prepare them for it by putting them in the disposition of a new life, and of fervour. A confessor will also prudently allow it to those, who desire it in a spirit of compunction, to bewail their sins at the sight of a misspent life, and to animate themselves with vigour now to begin a new one. But it is by no means to be permitted to those who are scrupulous in their confessions, or who are for making them over and over again; for this would but increase their uneasiness, and bewilder their imagination. A general confession, therefore, is to be recommended only with prudence, and upon mature deliberation. It is to be very diligently made, as a concern upon which a man's salvation mainly depends. A retreat for a few days is very proper for it, in which the mind, being free from other thoughts, may be more attentive to this, and which will furnish leisure for fervent prayer, pious meditation, a careful examination, tears of compunction, good resolutions, &c. We see this practice of general confessions recommended to us by the examples of St. Eligius, St. Tillo, King Pepin, St. Anselm, l. 3, Ep. 66.

8. It is a most advantageous practice, after this careful general confession, to make every year a retreat and an annual confession, to discover by a stricter search any neglects, sprouting passions, or omissions of duties; to be careful about them, and repair any sloth in the ordinary frequenting of the sacraments by a diligent annual confession. St. Charles Borromeo employed every year

two or three weeks in a retreat to prepare himself for such an annual confession, which he made with the greatest compunction for the slightest venial sins of frailty, after spending, on the day of that confession, eight hours on his knees to beg of God a true contrition and repentance. Cannot we allow for this examination seven or eight, or at least three or four days? Everything in nature falls to decay by degrees, unless continually renewed. Our best resolutions are insensibly impaired, and passions, once cut off, sprout up again, unless we watch over ourselves and renew in our souls the spirit of virtue. This, indeed, we endeavour to do in our evening examinations and in our ordinary confessions; but in these many things often escape us, which a narrower inspection into our hearts will discover to us, as daily experience shows. General confessions save many souls, which without them would have perished, whereof the Life of St. Vincent Paul furnishes us with many examples, which may be read on this subject, 19th July. How many carry a secret sting in their consciences, which they feel, though they do not distinctly discern its cause? A general confession will show it, pluck it out, appease all the troubles of their burthened mind, and give them a peace, which in their present state they do not know.

We find the practice of general confessions recommended by the tradition of the Church in all ages, as we see expressly from Socrates and Sozomen, supra, and by the examples of saints and holy men, as of St. Eligius of Noyon, St. Tillo, King Pepin, apud Hincm. ad Capit., Car. Mag., St. Anselm, l. 3, Ep. 66, the statutes of the Carthusians, p. 2, c. 11.

DISCOURSE XXXVI.

ON THE PREPARATION FOR CONFESSION.

1. The state of our souls greatly depends on the manner in which we approach the holy sacraments of penance and of the blessed Eucharist. Those who frequent them with fervour and due dispositions draw from them their spiritual life and strength. But some, and it is to be feared that their number is very great amongst Christians, go to confession at their regular times, but so carelessly, as if it were merely out of custom, or for fashion's sake. They have no sense of the difficulty and importance of the work,

and seem to take penance for an easy thing, in which it is impossible for them to fail. They go almost without prayer or preparation, as if they had but to confess what crimes easily strike their minds, and to say in words, or in an act of contrition which they have read over, that they are sorry for having offended God, thinking that then all is well with them. "I have sinned, and what sorrow has befallen me?"—Eccl. v. 5. Such sacrilegious confessions are heavy additions to their crimes, and, serving only to blind sinners, are the seals of their reprobation. For this sacrament is a source not of life but of death to those who so impiously abuse it. It behoves me, therefore, to examine in what manner I approach it, and consider what the conditions and dispositions are which I ought to bring to it.

The sacrament of penance has three parts that regard the penitent, "contrition, confession, and satisfaction," an essential defect in any of which will make it null and sacrilegious. Three things are to be well considered in every penitent, viz., the conversion of the heart, the confession of the mouth, and the chastisement of sin, as St. Gregory says, l. 6, in 2 Reg. x. 2. Contrition, with prayer and the examination of conscience, makes up the preparation before confession.

2. The first thing the penitent is to do in his preparation is to spend some time, more or less, as the difficulty of his conversion may seem to require, in earnest and humble prayer, to beg of Almighty God the grace and light to discover, detest, and confess well all his sins, that he may obtain pardon and mercy. He is to remember that his repentance must be the work of Almighty God, and is one of the greatest of his works, more difficult than was the creation of the whole world; and that without God he is not able so much as to conceive the least good thought that can be conducive to it. He must likewise reflect how the declared enemy of his salvation will not fail to employ all his arts and malice to make him miscarry in this great undertaking, to his eternal ruin, and how unworthy he himself is of all succour and grace from God, on account of his extreme baseness and ingratitude. Yet lifting up his eyes towards the divine mercies, which know no bounds, to which nothing is impossible, and which will be exalted in saving so undeserving and miserable a sinner, and humbling himself profoundly, as covered with his guilt and shame, before the infinite majesty of God, he must pour forth his soul in the most fervent prayer possible for so high and so undeserved a grace, persevering in it so long and with such earnestness that he

may hope God is graciously moved to stretch out the golden rod of his mercy upon him, enlightening his understanding to see, and touching his heart to detest and bewail sincerely all his offences. Has this been always my case? How great iniquities have I? "Discover to me my sins and wickedness."—Job, xiii.

3. After prayer follows the second part of this preparation, which is the examination of our conscience, an exercise of great advantage in itself, yet seldom performed with sufficient care by tepid Christians, though absolutely requisite for this sacrament. Few means are of equal advantage to this in helping us to subdue and root out our passions; for the first step towards obtaining a victory over them is to discover them and their sources, in order to call ourselves to an account for them, and take proper measures to extirpate them. By it, the soul learns the obstacles of her spiritual progress to remove them; finds out speedily what she has to correct in herself, before it has gained strength, and cleanses and watches always over her heart. This, then, is the capital enemy of all vices and imperfections, and the source of all our victories over our spiritual enemies. The very heathen philosophers inculcated it as the great remedy against all the disorders of souls, and prescribed it to be strictly performed every evening.

4. This examination, so necessary and advantageous in general, is an essential part of our preparation for this sacrament; for we must carefully examine our criminal heart before we can accuse and condemn it. We can never make our confession entire, unless by a diligent scrutiny we have first discovered all our sins, as far as we are able. Christ, therefore, by commanding us to confess them all, has commanded us first to examine ourselves; and an essential neglect in this duty must make the confession null and sacrilegious, as it exposes it to the danger of being criminally imperfect.

Too great a scrupulosity is to be avoided in it; this would but superfluously exhaust the vigour of the soul, and serve rather to perplex and disturb her. Christ requires only a moral diligence, such as a prudent person would use in an affair of importance. A metaphysical diligence, or the greatest possible to be used, would be very pernicious, would drown the soul in a labyrinth of inextricable scruples, and would serve to no good purpose. If, after a moral care, anything has escaped the search, it is inculpably forgotten, and such an omission can noways hurt the sacrament, as the precept of Christ is still fully complied with, and sins so for-

gotten are no less remitted by this repentance than those which are remembered and confessed; for the will no less sincerely repents also of them, and would confess them, were they known to the soul, along with the rest.

DISCOURSE XXXVII.

ON THE CONDITIONS OF A GOOD CONFESSION.

1. By the precept of confession a sinner is obliged distinctly to declare all mortal sins, or which he doubts may be such, committed after baptism, with their different species, number, and mortally aggravating circumstances. We distinguish the species of sins; either if they have objects that so differ, as pride and avarice; or if they are contrary to different virtues, or to the same virtue in a contrary manner, as prodigality and covetousness, which both injure the same virtue of liberality; the first by excess, the other by defect; or thirdly, if they are forbidden by precepts made upon motives of distinct virtues. For, though a holiday fall on a Sunday, or a vigil on another fast; or, though a thing be commanded by twenty laws or canons, all for the same end, a transgression will be but one sin, and a penitent satisfies by confessing he broke a fast of the Church; but not if the precept have different virtues or ends in view, as if a fast enjoined in penance in the sacrament fall on a Church fast.

Those sins are more grievous, which have an object, or impugn a virtue that is more noble; as, in the first place, those which directly injure God in himself, as, *e. g.*, the crucifixion of Christ, then a positive hatred of God, next idolatry, after these an unworthy communion; then blasphemy, next perjury, and other sacrileges; then vices contrary to charity; after, those against faith or hope; then the most grievous injuries against our neighbour, as first murder, &c., though the highest in a lower species are more heinous than the lowest in a higher. Thus, though perjury be more grievous than murder, murder is a greater crime than a superfluous true oath. But the particular intenseness of the will, more perfect knowledge or deliberation, and the like circumstances, aggravate the malice of sins more or less in the same kind.

2. Sins are distinct in number, by the acts being morally

distinct from one another. If a man be a whole night in committing a theft, or a whole day in going to a place and fighting a duel, he commits only one sin, unless he has revoked the intention of the sin, and resumed it again, or interrupted the act by a long application to something else. But if a sin has two species of malice, it is in morals to be reputed two sins also in number; as adultery, which is both an injustice and an incontinency: the theft of a holy thing is both an injustice and a sacrilege. Some call sins distinct also, which have adequate distinct objects; so that to detract with one affirmation against five persons is five sins. At least it contains the malice, that is equal; and the number of objects or persons injured must be expressed, as all agree. By these rules it appears that if a man made, a day or two or more before, a resolution to commit a sin, he must confess, as nearly as he can guess, how often that intention occurred to his mind, and was renewed during that time, as the interruptions make the acts so many sins. So, in a criminal delay of restitution or payment of debts, the number of the acts, which are renewed, is to be confessed as making so many sins. If the exterior action of the sin be continued for days, the number of the interior acts, renewed during that time, is to be still expressed as nearly as may be, as, *e. g.*, in a continued pursuit of another out of hatred.

A person, who does not exactly remember the number, must express it thereabouts, rather the most he thinks, yet not at random really more than he thinks; for this would be a lie.

In confessing a long habit, a penitent is not to aim at one total number, but to declare how often a month, week, or day for so long, taking one day with another, he may, *e. g.*, have sworn rashly or falsely, also usually what kind of oaths. This method is more certain, and also expresses better and more clearly the state of the penitent, and the malice and vehemence of his habit. One, who has long in former confessions confessed his sins only in general terms, is bound afterwards to supply that defect by examining and expressing the number as nearly as he can.

He who has stolen three crowns from three different persons, must express that circumstance, because it contained three distinct injuries. The exterior action must be confessed, because it is the complement of the sin, though the interior efficacious will may sometimes have contained the whole malice.

3. There are some circumstances, which add a new species to a sin, as, *e. g.*, if a thing stolen be sacred, or taken out of a sacred

place; these must be confessed; otherwise, neither the species nor number of the sins would be declared. Moreover, the circumstances which do not change the species of a sin, still, if they grievously or mortally aggravate its malice, are to be expressed in a confession. For they change very much the state of the penitent and the enormity of the sin, and often require different remedies and penances. The confessor cannot proceed, either as judge or physician, without the knowledge of them; they often make one sin equivalent in malice to two or three, as, *e. g.*, a theft of a larger sum of money. Hence, the ancient canons order the penitent diligently to inquire into and consider all the circumstances. "Diligently inquiring into the circumstances both of the sinner and of the sin," says the third General Council of Lateran, t. 11. Conc., p. 173. The ancient penitentials frequently repeat this precept. And the ancient Canon Law, Can. 14 et 15, de Pœn. Dist., says: "Let him consider the quality of the crime, place, time, continuance, diversity of the person; all that difference is to be confessed." This St. Chrysostom means when he teaches, "Careful and pure confession of sins is to be made;" Hom. 30. in Gen. t. 4, p. 294. He, hence, exaggerates and trembles at the dreadful difficulties of the priestly charge, in which a man is bound, in the tribunal of penance, to judge, distinguish, and enjoin proportioned penances for every sin, according to the laws of the divine justice, under the dangers of our blindness, complaisance, favour, &c. De Sacerd., c. 4, t. 1, p. 374.

The circumstances of a sin are to be considered by those which attend moral actions, and are comprised under these seven by Aristotle and other writers on moral philosophy. Who did the action? What was the action or object? In what place was it done? By what means? For what end? In what manner? and at what time?*

Under the circumstances of the person that sins, or *who;* it is to be considered, in impurity, if said person was under a particular obligation of chastity, a virgin, or one married; in scandal, if a priest, a parent, a superior, or master of a family, a judge, prince, or any superior; in justice or charity, if a public person, a parent, one hired to him he injured, &c.

Under the circumstances of the object, or *what*, is to be considered, whether the action be accomplished; in revenge, how great

* Quis, quid, ubi, quibus auxiliis, cur, quomodo, quando?

the desired injury was; in detraction, how grievous the prejudice and injury; and whether against many, and how many; in impurity, whether the thought regarded a relation, a virgin, one married, &c. So as to lewd discourse, it is to be expressed whether it was before virgins, married persons, children, &c.

Under the circumstances of *place;* was it holy or public?

Under that of *by what means;* whether it was by abusing some sacred thing, by another's sin, &c.

Under that of the *end;* whether any other evil end was proposed in a sin; as if a man stole to get drunk. And, though an evil end was not intended, whether any danger of it followed; as in detraction, or all sins with others, or scandal, who began first, &c. In theft, besides the injustice, the danger to which a man exposes his life is another sin, though sufficiently understood by the confessor in the first, so not necessary to be mentioned distinctly, no more than those of the state of the penitent if known to the priest.

Under that of *how*, or in what manner; was it with more than ordinary deliberation or intenseness of the will; with a formal express act of contempt of the law or superior, by habit, out of malice, envy, jealousy, or hatred; with treachery or craft, &c.

Under the circumstance of *time;* was it, *e. g.*, assisting at mass, on the day of communion, and at least in public, or debauchery of a long continuance, or was it on a Sunday or holiday?

The general circumstances of sins, such as general ingratitude to God, &c., need not be confessed, unless they are exaggerated by some particular circumstances. Presumption is to be confessed, if the hope of an easy pardon positively encouraged the sinner to offend, not otherwise. A resistance to, or contempt of, divine inspirations is to be declared, if it was considerably greater than ordinary, or if they were openly and expressly excluded. He who has exposed himself to an immediate occasion of sin, is to confess of what sin; if the sin actually followed, it suffices to confess it, without the occasion.

From this detail we see Gerson had reason to say: "I have found few who have confessed perfectly and entirely."—Lib. de Confess., n. 32. But the priest is not to be too troublesome in inquiring into circumstances, except where evident occasion offers itself, nor are penitents to be too nice or scrupulous in their detail. All superfluous circumstances or questions are to be most carefully shunned on both sides, but especially by the confessor.

4. Mere imperfections, which seem not venial sins or transgres-

sions of any obligation, are not alone sufficient matter of absolution, though indeed they usually are accompanied with some venial sin of sloth, &c., and are piously heard in confession, in order to advise an amendment, providing a long verbose detail in them be avoided. For it is saying nothing for a penitent to confess he has been passionate, ambitious, prone to this or that, or not loved God, &c.

The tepid, in confessing ordinary venial sins, ought to add something in particular of their life past, for which they may be more secure of a sufficient contrition.

In a doubt whether a sin was mortal or not, it is necessarily to be confessed. He who confessed a sin, as doubtful whether he committed it or not, is obliged afterwards to confess it as certain, if he remember it afterwards certainly, but not if his doubt be only something stronger, as it still remains uncertain.

5. A mortal sin inculpably omitted in confession is to be necessarily confessed, if it afterwards occur, but as formerly inculpably omitted. In a general confession sins never before confessed in a valid confession, and again, those committed since the last confession, are to be distinctly mentioned; as this circumstance very much alters them, as also the present state of the penitent.

A mortal sin is inculpably omitted in confession, first, by an invincible oblivion or ignorance of it. Secondly, if a penitent cannot confess some sin without evident danger of some great prejudice or public infamy; as if one in a ship or hospital cannot confess without being overheard by many, and should be guilty of some capital or very infamous crime, which, through some wicked hearer, would probably be divulged, in which case he ought to confess his other sins, and conceal that till he could confess it without that imminent danger. In the article of death such danger is rarely to be presumed. Thirdly, if a dying man has not time to confess all his sins; in such circumstances let the priest be more solicitous to excite him to perfect contrition. Likewise, if in a fire, shipwreck, or danger of battle, there is not leisure to make an entire confession, it suffices in that case to confess as much as time permits, and with a sincere contrition to be absolved. But they who escape that danger are bound in their next confession to mention all mortal sins so omitted in their former confession.

It is a mortal sin of detraction to discover an accomplice in any sin, even in confession, if it can be avoided. A penitent must

rather confess to a strange confessor, to whom such accomplice will not be known, if it can be conveniently done, or must rather say something little in confession, *e. g.*, if one had reproached a father or only brother with adultery, let him only say that he treated him very contumeliously. But if he cannot go to another confessor, or confess his own crime otherwise, he is then to confess it, though an accomplice, *e. g.*, a wife, parent, &c., be discovered under so inviolable a secret, and purely out of such necessity.

6. The conditions of a good confession may be reduced to these six: that it be entire, clear, short, bashful, with sorrow and humility.* It is not entire but sacrilegious, and a misrepresentation of the penitent's state, even if he knowingly exaggerates his crimes considerably too much; as, *e. g.*, if he confesses some crime which he knows he never committed, mentions a thing doubtful as certain, or an indeterminite number as determinite, though in such exaggerations usually ignorance, a good intention, and *bona fides* may excuse the past, and it is advisable in doubts rather to lean to the highest as the safest, but still expressing the doubt. Secondly, it is more grievously defective in integrity, if it declare not all the mortal sins, with their number and necessary circumstances. Thirdly, if it studies to disguise or extenuate considerably anything in this.

There are but few souls so lost to faith and to the fear of God, as to dare knowingly to insult religion in the very act of holy penance, and openly lie to the Holy Ghost in the most sacred tribunal of mercy, and in the very pretended supplication for pardon. But many fall into this impiety, without considering it, because they discover their consciences only by halves, and under the artifices and cloaks of pride. Instead of a sincere, open accusation, they qualify their sins by softening, studied expressions. They pass hastily over their most shameful wounds, for fear they should be perfectly understood by the priest, and rejoice if they perceive he was not so sufficiently watchful and attentive as to catch their half expressions, and probe their sores. If he be too vigilant, and begin to search their wounds, they fly to excuses and disguises, lest his hand should, by main force, find out their corruption. Ah! foolish hypocrites, ingenious and artful to deceive; does not your invisible Judge read all your history in your hearts, and discover there what you refuse to lay open to him to efface? Whilst you secretly triumph in your

* Integra, clara, brevis, verecunda, dolens, humilisque.

disguises, he insults your ridiculous shame and artifice, as the prophet did the impious wife of Jeroboam, who hoped to impose upon him, and pass unknown to him in a borrowed dress. *Quare aliam te esse simulas?* 3 Reg. xiv. 6. Base soul, show yourself what you are; unmask your miserable heart; it is all open to me; my invisible eye penetrates its abominations. Foolish that you are to imagine, that slender disguises can hide your malice; more foolish yet to seek to hide your miseries from your physician, who would remove and heal them. *Quare aliam te esse simulas?*

7. Many confessions, again, are not entire, because the penitents conceal several circumstances, which would discover a greater degree of consent and malice; such as measures taken for the crimes, resolutions of it long formed and often renewed; dangerous occasions frequented; circumstances accompanying the act or desires, which would clearly show the fury of our passion, or the fullness of the consent, which they study to extenuate and palliate, &c. Some, by an affected timorousness and scrupulosity in certain points, endeavour to make the state of their soul so obscure, that their wilful passions may pass only for groundless fears, or doubtful alarms of one who fears all things.

If many seek to cover their criminal actions and desires by such artifices, many more study to suppress great part of the interior malice of their hearts. They seldom disclose the whole criminal motives and principles of their actions. It is from the disposition of the heart that vices are to be taxed and weighed, as their malice consists and is to be sought in it. Yet, how seldom is this heart laid open in the tribunal? How many disguise it to themselves in their examinations? How many more hide it from their judge in the sacrament? They expose their actions, but never their motives and their conscience. Men, *e. g.*, confess they are censorious, passionate, self-opinionated, or obstinate in their will, froward or disobedient in smaller things; but never mention that deep wound of pride in their hearts, whence those other sins proceed. They accuse themselves of frequent small detractions, disgusts, antipathies, or injurious treatment and contempt of others; but never add that a secret envy or jealousy of others' reputation, talents, merits, or fortune, is the spring, whence they arise and are entertained. They confess a certain vague human respect, certain chagrins under great provocations, in which they pretend they live, or the like; but forget the main point, which is, perhaps, a secret vanity, that makes them insupportable to every body, and able to bear nothing

themselves but what flatters their self-love, and soothes their favourite passion. In like manner criminal fondnesses, covetousness, ambition, and other grievous interior sins are even fostered and cherished in the heart; only some outward branches are sentenced to be lopped off. The root, hidden under the earth, is concealed, and even industriously nourished. But God is the interpreter of hearts. With him no art or disguise will be admitted. *Apud cordis interpretem ars non admittitur ad salutem.*—St. Aug.

8. Confession is to be also clear, *i. e.*, naked, clear without any craft of words, seeking to lay open the full malice of the sins in its blackest colours. Some confess so bashfully, and by halves, as to impose only a phantom and false idol of themselves, instead of their own hearts. They express their crimes in such vague, general terms, that the confessor can form no distinct idea of their state; and, when he inquires into it, they answer in such an obscure manner, intermingling excuses, doubts, fears all together, so as only to make the mist thicker, and leave him more in the dark. O cursed shame! thus to destroy the very end of holy confession, and turn it into an artful pleading only to impose! The penitent is to remember, that he here acts the part of an accuser of his own criminal conscience; consequently that he is to discover and lay open fully its guilt. If he prevaricates, instead of pardon he does but play the hypocrite, and mock God. A true penitent soul does not excuse her failings, but enters into a fair detail of them in her confession; making it perfectly, that thus God may receive her repentance, and not become himself her accuser. "If thou accusest thyself, God excuseth thee: if thou excusest thyself, God accuseth thee," says St. Augustin.

9. A third condition is, that confession be short. Nothing superfluous, nothing but what is necessary to give a knowledge of the penitent's state and sins, is to be intermixed; no word of his health, domestic affairs, friends, or what his name or country is; in a word, nothing is to be asked or said foreign to the naked, simple manifestation of his conscience and guilt. The very accusation of sins ought to be concise and short, without a relation of any minute impertinent circumstance. Some persons cannot accuse themselves, *e. g.*, of anger or a lie, without giving a detail of the provocation they received, &c. Others will make all their domestic affairs enter into their confessions. This is against the nature and simplicity of confession, and contrary to the reverence due to the sacrament, and to the dispositions of a true penitent,

who is too full of sense of his guilt, and of feeling sentiments of compunction, to entertain himself with what is foreign to it. The penitent is to remember he is not to make his confession an entertaining history of his life and adventures; that such prolix and impertinent narrations can only proceed from a talkativeness, curiosity, self-love, and secret pride, which finds a pleasure in dwelling on itself and its concerns, or in such circumstances as may move the confessor to regard, tenderness, and compassion; all which is quite contrary to a spirit of compunction, and to the nature of an accusation, as it tends only to draw their own and their confessor's attention from their guilt, and to lose sight of it in such a medley of idle circumstances. The very accusation of sins is to be full indeed, but succinct, comprehended in the fewest words, ready, and with as quick despatch as gravity, seriousness, and a full confession will allow, as St. Thomas observes, Sup. q. q. a. 4.

Fourthly, the confession must be bashful; the heart inwardly blushing at the baseness of its crimes, and condemning itself to all the confusion which it deserves for them; the words also expressing its infamy to the utmost, boldly desiring to draw upon the guilty soul all the reproaches and confusion which are justly due, and by which she labours to prevent eternal disgrace. An impudent narration of sins, without any shame or confusion, has neither the spirit nor the air of a confession. In temptations against the sixth commandment everything must be carefully expressed in the most modest terms, and so short and cursorily that no images may be painted on the mind.

Fifthly, the confession must be weeping, or with sorrow in the heart; and the marks of it in the words and behaviour of the penitent. The act of contrition some think ought necessarily to be made before the confession; if it be not, it may be followed by an accusation, in general, of all before confessed prior to absolution.

Sixthly, it must be humble, both by humility of the heart, and in the exterior behaviour, and great modesty of dress, according to custom on the knees, uncovered, and having put off spurs and swords. Knights of military religious Orders, of Malta, Alcantara, the Teutonic, &c., approach the sacraments with their swords on, by a privilege of custom, as in them that is a mark of their honour and respect in an action.

10. True humility of heart is a condition often wanting in confession. Many intermix the artifices and palliations of pride

with the accusation of their crimes, which they only discover by halves, and under disguises. Many make to enter into their confessions titles of worldly honour, as great acquaintance or friends, birth, rank, advantage of fortune; generosity, talents of body or mind, or whatever else may seem glorious in the world; or the number of their prayers, their alms, mortifications, patience, or an enumeration of sins which they are exempt from; and they find more pride in the exhibition of some such foolish vanity than they feel confusion from their crimes, which are their own. Many allege excuses, thinking by them to extenuate their offences, such as the violence of their temptation, their long resistance, their grief and remorse, &c., like Adam, who, instead of an humble confession of his guilt, threw the blame on Eve; and she, seeking a like excuse, on the devil. This is to carry pride caressed and openly engraved on their faces, and to present themselves marked with it before the very throne of mercy. Such persons prove themselves still possessed with the spirit of the devil. But the language of sincere grief and repentance is a language which is humble, natural, and sincere. A soul, touched with a true regret, knows not how to dissemble or excuse her faults, but impeaches herself, aggravating each as a faithful accuser. To use in confession such mitigations and arts is really for a soul to declare, that she comes not in the spirit, nor even in the habit of a true penitent.

11. Sacramental confession cannot be made, nor absolutely received by a letter, or by a message at a distance. "Christ was pleased that the penitents should be presented as criminals before this tribunal in person;" says the Council of Trent, Sess. xiv. cap. 2. And an ancient writer, quoted in the Canon Law, says, Cap. Quem Pœnit. Dist. 1: "Sins are to be confessed by corporal presence, not by a messenger nor by writing. You, who have sinned by yourselves, must blush and bear your confusion in your own person. For so Christ has commanded." One, indeed, who is dumb, may, and is obliged, to confess by signs or by writing, but himself must be present. The tradition of the Church holds this corporal presence and oral confession, when possible, to be essential to this sacrament. It was sometimes a practice of devotion, though never of obligation, recommended by St. Thomas, in 4 Dist. 17, q. 3, a. 3, questione 2, p. 109, et a. 4, questione 3, ad 3, that dying persons, when no priest could be had, made a confession to some layman; by which they exercised an act of humiliation and penance, and testified their desire of subjecting

themselves to the tribunal of the Church. Thus, the truly great captain and devout Christian knight, Bayard, being mortally wounded, made his confession to his footman. But, for fear of abuses and inconveniences, this devotion is entirely disused. Nor could it ever be a sacrament or of precept, as the priests are constituted by Christ the sole ministers and dispensers of this sacrament. For, to them alone Christ committed this authority. "This right was granted only to the priests," says St. Ambrose, l. 1. de Pœnit., c. 2, t. 4.

For one, whose language is not understood by the priest, it is allowed (nay commanded, in danger of death, to persons conscious to themselves of any mortal sin) to confess to the priest by an interpreter, who is bound to the same seal of secrecy with the priest. As to a public confession of secret sins, it may be sometimes practised out of voluntary devotion, as a free act of humiliation, where there is no danger of it giving any scandal, as before a pious company of religious; otherwise it would be sinful. But Christ has in no case commanded it. Whence, St. Leo being informed, that some had enjoined such a confession to certain penitents, condemned their presumption against the apostolical rule, and their illegal and unjust usurpation, as he calls it, "seeing it is sufficient to discover the guilt of consciences to the priests alone by secret confession."—Ep. 136.

12. We are to distinguish a timorous and a scrupulous conscience. The first is the property of true virtue and divine charity, which, with Job and all the saints, fears all its works, punishes by severe penances in itself, flies and dreads even the shadow of the least sin, and in all real doubts, both in confession and in all its conduct, leans to the safe side, and seeks the will of God by good advice, full of humility and distrust in its own lights. The world, to excuse its own libertinism and sloth in virtue, often fastens on this characteristic of all the saints the odious name of scrupulosity, which differs infinitely from it, and which is not a daughter of holy charity, that fills the soul with light and spiritual understanding; but of darkness and confusion, and is, in a great degree, a most dangerous and pernicious evil. For, it is a very great impediment to the love of God and progress in virtue, drowning a soul in fruitless fears, and wasting her by superfluous anxieties. It makes life itself a bitterness, is an insupportable torture of the mind, more grievous than can be believed by those who have not experienced it, a great loss of time and virtue, a wasting of the soul, a certain cause of tepidity,

and often in the end, if not checked, the ruin both of soul and body; as it tends to hurt the head and bodily health, leads to madness, of which it contains always some portion, and sometimes to sins, through the very tediousness of life, or even to despair. It, therefore, behoves us to learn what this evil is, which so few have a right idea of; also what are its causes, and what its remedies.

13. A scruple is a foolish, groundless imagination and fear of a danger of sin, where there is no such danger. Whence it differs widely from timorousness of conscience, which fears the least danger; but yet with prudence, and where there is reason to fear. A scruple is not a formed judgment, but a wavering of the soul, not knowing what to say or do, even in things the most evident. Scrupulosity is a habit of such scruples. The penitent himself can never be capable of judging whether he is scrupulous or not; for no man can be judge in his own case, above all in scruples when his mind is so clouded and disturbed, that he can judge of nothing justly. But the marks of this state are so evident, that a prudent director cannot fail to discover it; seldom indeed from one confession; but after four or five, or some experience of such a soul, he will certainly see her malady, without any danger of mistaking it, viz., by these signs: if the penitent doubts of things which he cannot but know certainly, or remember he has already confessed or asked advice about; or if he doubt of almost every action or obligation, or of any of them, evidently irrationally, and merely through the disturbance of his imagination; or if he often change his opinion about the same thing at the least shadow; or feeds himself with extravagant reflections and whims upon the most trifling circumstances of his actions; or if he be never satisfied in his fears, entertains them obstinately, not acquiescing in any one's solution, but harbouring and indulging them.

Some are scrupulous in all lines; others only in certain lines, as in their examinations of conscience, in anxiety whether their sins are pardoned, in repeating their prayers, or with regard to certain interior temptations or whims of their imagination. These are often very base by certain fits, or in some other respects, in which they cherish some favourite passions, and allow themselves the most dangerous liberties without scruple. The case of these is very dangerous, especially if they affect to pass for scrupulous, and desire to flatter themselves that they really are so also in those indulged passions. They resemble the Pharisees,

who, out of a motive of conscience, would not enter the house of Pilate, whilst at the same time they were prosecuting through envy a known innocent man, and the true Messiah; and who, fondly wallowing in pride and hypocrisy, yet were scrupulous in prayer and tithes, and works of supererogation.

14. There are three different sorts of scrupulosity, arising from as many very different causes. The first comes from God, and is of souls which are beginning to serve him. The second is from ourselves, or a constitution of a body too much indulged. The third is from the devil.

As to that scrupulosity, which comes from God, it is chiefly the trial of souls newly beginning to serve him with fervour. It is said to be from God, because he gives not that light which would dispel them, and scatter the clouds which darken the imagination. He thus punishes their past hardness of heart and insensibility, by permitting them to fall into excessive fears. "I will strike their heart with fright; they shall tremble at the noise of a leaf that flies."—Lev. xxvi. 36. It is most advantageous and necessary to such souls, being a severe, interior trial, serving to purify and cleanse the soul from all earthly affections, which are not to be destroyed and rooted out without some bitter inward remedies. Thus, it disposes a heart to eminent virtue. St. Ignatius of Loyola, F. Surin, and most other faithful souls, passed through this purgation, many during several years together. The more severe this trial is, usually the greater mark it is of a higher perfection, to which God designs to raise a soul more perfectly dead to all, that is any way inordinate in her; for the love of creatures cannot be perfectly expelled out of a heart but by violence, and with much bitterness and harshness. This scrupulosity is, indeed, a state of imperfection, and of an excess of fear; but it proceeds from a good principle and a motive of charity, viz.: the dread of offending God. If a soul be obstinate, and refuse to obey and follow direction, she will be lost by this trial. But, if she be obedient to her director, acquiesce calmly in his advice, and despise her vain fears in blind obedience, denying her own will and judgment, and making to God a sacrifice even of her fears, which she conceives for his sake, she will be at last happily delivered, and translated on a sudden into a land of light, joy, and peace.

15. That scrupulosity, which arises from a natural melancholy, thoughtful constitution, and a violent imagination, obstinately adhering to the impression of fear from all groundless occasions,

is usually vehement, and hard to be conquered, The physician may sometimes be of service.* Deep thought or pensiveness, sudden fear, solitude, and the like, are very pernicious to this disposition of mind, and are to be shunned. It is designed by God for the good of souls, by being their trial and cross; but it must be carefully resisted and fought against by the means mentioned below, without ever yielding to a disposition to thoughtfulness and melancholy, and to reasoning.

Lastly, there is a scrupulosity proceeding from the devil, who indeed labours to turn all scrupulosity to his ends, to draw souls from making any progress in virtue, and by abjectness, melancholy, and tediousness, to lead them into sin and the very gulf of despair.

16. It is inconceivable what interior grievous pains, struggles, and anguish the scrupulous suffer. One would think such souls would be easily cured, even for their own peace and tranquillity; but so it is, that there is not any moral evil in the soul more stubborn, or more difficult to be overcome. Nothing requires greater firmness and resolution in the director, or greater violence in the penitent.

Prayer and a blind obedience are the two great means to remove scrupulosity. As the first step towards a cure in any disorder is for a person to know his distemper, the scrupulous soul must, in the first place, be convinced that she is really scrupulous, and be persuaded how grievous and dangerous an evil this is. It causes her to spend all her strength in fighting against chimeras and imaginary enemies, by which her passions, especially dejection and a secret pride, are permitted to fortify themselves. Virtue, particularly hope, fervour, and divine love, is choked up like the good seed amidst thorns and briars. Obedience, the soul of humility and true virtue, is openly trampled upon, and the designs of God upon the soul quite subverted. She is incapable of a spirit of prayer, or of filling her heart with the sentiments of any true virtue, labouring under the agitations and disturbance of her fears. In short, out of a fear of being lost for eternity, she adopts the method to be lost, and runs wilfully through the greatest tortures into both corporal and spiritual ruin, whilst it is in her power at once to free herself from these evils, and purchase to herself assurance, peace, and joy. But it is not from herself that she can surely learn her disorder. Her director alone can discover it, and must make her sensible of it; nor is there any

* Bathing in the sea, or violent purgatives, &c.

spiritual disorder, that requires a firmer and more skilful assistant. When persons, on their side, would fain pass for scrupulous, this is often only a refined pride and an artifice of self-love to seek to be more indulged in some favourite passions, or to be soothed in their vanity.

17. When the soul sees her malady, she must, by fervent and perseverant prayer, implore the divine assistance, with great humility and confidence, being sure thus to obtain it, if she accompanies it with a distrust in her own judgment, and blind obedience to her directors in the points of her scrupulosity.

She must be persuaded, that her salvation depends on the submission of her will and judgment to that of God's ministers, who are appointed to govern her, and hold his place in regard to her. Following this rule, she cannot go astray: without it, all the other means she can practise will be fruitless. This is the order established by God for the direction of our souls; and "he who resists the power, resists the ordinance of God."—Rom. xiii. 2. St. Teresa testifies of herself, c. 31, 33, that, though she was most assured of the inspiration and voice of God in anything, she would never undertake or determine anything in it, but according to the advice of her director. And Pope Gregory XV., in the bull of her canonization, *Omnipotens sermo Dei*, A. D. 1622, says of her: "She not only submitted all her exterior actions to the judgment of her superiors, with the greatest humility of spirit, but also all her thoughts. Having written a book on the Canticles, filled with great piety, she threw it into the fire, to obey her confessor." What wonder, indeed, that the discreetest and most divinely enlightened amongst the saints should make obedience their rule in the conduct of their consciences, since God himself gave the same rule to St. Paul, and to all those saints whom he miraculously called to himself.

This is much more particularly the rule for scrupulous persons. For they are not capable of judging for themselves, under the prejudice of their fears, which make them mistake every shadow for a ghost, and raise mere phantoms in their imagination. It is also to blind obedience that God has annexed the graces of their cure. Nor must they seek for conviction from their confessor, or reason the case with him. This only serves to indulge and increase their evil, and under their disturbance of mind they are incapable of right reason upon that subject; nor would that be obedience, or have its merit. They must be assured that, if they will not resolve to obey, without satisfaction given them, and

with their eyes shut, their case is desperate. Not even an angel from heaven can ever cure them, till they have learned to deny simply their own judgment, and govern themselves purely by obedience. They must not endeavour to overcome their scruples by reasoning, but set out courageously against them, and despise them, according to the rules given them by their confessor. Innumerable souls, almost lost with scruples, no sooner submitted themselves calmly to the judgment of their directors, than they found themselves instantly restored to peace. Gerson, Prœp. Miss. Cons. 3, t. p. 323, and from him St. Antoninus, par. 1, tit. 3, c. 10, t. 1. p. 69, relates, that a certain disciple of St. Bernard was so disturbed with scruples, that he durst by no means approach the altar to celebrate the divine mysteries. St. Bernard understanding this said to him: "Go, brother, and celebrate on my word; I take it upon me. The disciple obeyed, and never felt any further annoyance from his scruples. But you will say, on these great authors, I would obey, if I had a St. Bernard for my director. You are grievously mistaken, whoever you are; for you have not committed yourself and your salvation to a man, because he is prudent or learned; but because he is your confessor. Obey him, therefore, not as a man, but as God commanding you through him, as long as he commands not against God. Often your obedience will be so much the more agreeable to God, and profitable to yourself, as he, whom you obey for God, is more unworthy." Gerson adds another example (Consid. 3), of one perpetually disturbed with scruples about the recital of the divine office, till his director enjoined him for his penance never to repeat any part which he had once said.

What can the penitent fear in obeying? He follows by it the sure known will of God no less than if dictated to him by an angel sent on purpose from heaven to instruct him. "He who hears you, hears me."—Luke, x. 16. If he should chance to omit any sin in confession, or his consent should have been wilful in any evil thought, his repentance and confession will still be entire, as he omits it inculpably. Nay, his confessor is still to oblige him to follow his direction, even should there be danger of such an omission, when this is necessary to deliver him from some scrupulosity; for, a material integrity of confession does not oblige under so great a spiritual and corporal prejudice or danger. The scrupulous person often is not obliged to an equal diligence in his examination, or to many other rules to be observed by others, but impracticable to him for fear of greater mischief.

18. As to scrupulosity in confessions; after a loose or tepid life, or after a general confession, it is natural that, for some time, sins of the life past, not confessed, should occur in the ordinary confessions to be made up. If, henceforth, a soul should doubt of things, which must have been confessed before, or the like, this rule must be given her, that she must mention nothing of her life past, without being certain it was never confessed before, and also certain it was wilfully consented to and a mortal sin. What is really doubtful in itself would seem certain to one that is scrupulous. If something really doubtful should have been passed over, it is much better it should be so than that the scrupulosity should be incurably indulged. If it be necessary that the confessor limit the time and method of the examination of conscience, or what is not to be mentioned in confession, these rules are strictly to be observed by the penitent soul; otherwise she would sin by wilful scrupulosity, by which she hurts her corporal and spiritual health, checks her spiritual progress, defends proudly her own judgment, and depreciates the goodness of God, whom she represents to herself rather as a tyrant, laying snares for her, and delighted in her loss, than as a kind and tender father. Iterating scrupulously examens or confessions only increases and exaggerates exceedingly the evil, as it is but scratching a sore. This is especially true of those, who think they are never rightly understood. If a penitent be scrupulously anxious about the pardon of his sins, let him read the letter of St. Gregory the Great to Gregoria, maid of honour to the Empress, l. 6, Ep. 22. "I know that you love God, and I confide in his mercy that he has said to you: 'Much is remitted to her, because she has loved much.'—Luke, vii. You add, you will always trouble me till I shall write, that it has been revealed to me that your sins are forgiven you. You ask here what is both difficult and unprofitable; difficult, for I am unworthy of any revelation; unprofitable, because God would not have you secure for your sins, till you shall be able to weep no longer for them. To the end of your life, you must always live fearful, and wash yourself with daily tears."

In scruples about consent to interior thoughts of blasphemy, rash judgment, &c., many things pass in the imagination, which the will all the while abhors. Let the person calmly repress them; violence would impress them more strongly. Gerson relates (de Rem. Blasph.), that a monk had suffered such temptations during twenty years, not daring to discover them. At length he disclosed them to a spiritual father in writing, being

ashamed to do so in words. The director assured him they had never passed his will, and laying his hand upon the penitent's head, said: "Son, I take all the sin and its guilt upon my own head." The monk acquiesced, and never felt any further molestation.

All scrupulous persons must carefully fly idleness, affected solitude, and the sighing company of such as are infected with the same disorder. All this contributes very much to create perplexities, to entertain the mind in doubts, and to confirm the will in its obstinacy. Serious occupation removes the occasions of those phantoms and objects which disturb its peace. They must meditate on the mercy, goodness, and perfections of God, and more frequently entertain themselves with sentiments of confidence and love, than with motives of servile fear.

DISCOURSE XXXVIII.

ON SACRAMENTAL ABSOLUTION AND SATISFACTION.

1. The Council of Trent defines, according to the doctrine of Scripture, and the constant tradition of the Church, that the sacramental absolution is not a bare ministry, or a declaration that the sins of the penitent are forgiven, but in the form of a judicial act, by which sentence is pronounced by the priest, as judge. Sess. XIV. cap. 6. "He sits judge on the earth. The Lord follows his servant;" says St. Chrysostom, Hom. 5. de Verbis Isa., t. 6, p. 132. For he truly loosens and remits the sins in the name of God, and as his delegate and vicegerent. The absolution, therefore, is pronounced by God's minister on earth, after cognizance of the penitent's sins, and his sincere dispositions of repentance; but, at the same time, ratified by Christ, the invisible high-priest in heaven. This sentence, therefore, blots out the guilt of the sin, and effaces the handwriting that stood against the sinner, restores the lost soul to the favour and friendship of Almighty God, clothes her again with the rich and sacred robe of sanctifying grace, revives past merits deadened by sin, and in a moment produces that great and wonderful change in the soul, by which she is transferred from the frightful state of sin to that of grace; and, from a slave of the devil,

made the child of God, the glorious companion of the saints, and enrolled a denizen of heaven, and co-heir with Christ. The angels wait in silence, in expectation of this happy word; and at it the whole court of heaven sounds forth the praises of the great God of mercies, each citizen congratulating one another on the joy of the recovery of this new citizen. The penitent must receive this gracious sentence in the most profound sentiments of humility, compunction, and ardent love.

2. It is a notorious slander of certain modern sectaries, that the Catholic Church teaches, that absolution remits sin, without repentance, or at a cheap rate; whereas the fear of her tribunal of penance was a great motive to impenitent libertines to set up the standard of heresy, and deny her jurisdiction. Her discipline of penance, though mixed with the Gospel sweetness, is more severe than theirs, and seems a yoke no way supportable; such enemies are they of penance, and so unwilling to undergo the test of it. Her sacrament of reconciliation is made up of all the different acts of true penance, and is a course of that virtue. Her doctrine in this article is most holy and pure; for, though all her children, who have forfeited their allegiance to God by sin, are bound to submit themselves to her tribunal by the command of Christ, yet it is perpetually inculcated to them, that instead of pardon they incur the guilt of sacrilege, if they approach it without the dispositions of true penance; and all possible means are used to excite her children to them. She moreover repeats in her canons, and by the voice of her ministers, that the benefit of absolution is to be denied to all, who do not give evident marks of a sincere conversion of heart. On which may be read the rules of St. Charles Borroméo, Cardinal Grimaldi, Cardinal Denholf, and the late instructions of all the present greatest luminaries of the French prelates.*

"Then the absolution of the president is true, when it follows the will of the judge," as St. Gregory the Great says, Hom. 26. in Evang., t. 3, p. 1555. And again: "The causes are to be weighed, and then the power of binding and loosing is to be exercised. It is to be seen what sin went before, and what penance followed, that the sentence of the pastor may absolve those, whom God visits by the grace of compunction."—Ib.

3. The priest is bound to deny absolution, even in the article of death, to all who are manifestly indisposed, such as those

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who refuse to be reconciled with an enemy, or to forgive an injury; to make restitution for any injustice, or to pay lawful debts; to satisfy for contumelies or injuries committed; to renounce any sin, as prodigality, &c., or any immediate occasion of sin, as to destroy bad books they are accustomed to read; women to leave off going with breasts naked, faces painted, &c., parents to instruct their children and domestics in their Catechism, or to take in other matters the necessary care of them; to all who are ignorant in the Catechism, of the mysteries of the Trinity or incarnation, though they may promise sincerely to learn them; as to other parts of the Catechism, or other things mentioned, upon a sincere promise of learning them, the penitent may be absolved the first time; but if he has once broke his word, his sincerity is to be suspected, and absolution deferred till he has actually fulfilled his promises. And in cases of restitution or satisfaction, in things of great moment, if it can be done, it is usually advisable to defer absolution till it be actually made.

Absolution is to be deferred to those, who are doubtfully disposed, till the doubt shall be removed, and the penitent's dispositions ascertained. For the priest is obliged to be a faithful dispenser, and not give holy things to be perhaps sacrilegiously profaned; not to acquit those, who may be worthy of death, and whom Christ does not absolve; nor lead the blind to hell; nor to judge without sufficient knowledge of the cause. Hence the late learned Bishop of Arras, Instr., p. 505, says: "The confessor must have a moral certainty of the disposition of the penitent, by solid remarkable signs. And in this all divines agree." Suarez, &c. Such a moral certainty is to be understood as the matter is capable of, viz., a firm and prudent judgment, grounded on solid marks of sincere repentance. For this reason absolution is to be deferred to habitual sinners, even the first time, unless they give extraordinary marks of a true conversion; because in such persons a sincere repentance usually is the work of some time, not of an hour; and as an evil habit is an immediate inward occasion, some time is necessary to diminish its violence by the employment of proper means. Also, some delay is often a great means to give such sinners a sense of their state, and make them more serious to amend it. It is likewise to be deferred to those, who have often relapsed into mortal sin after penance; in which case it is to be considered how soon, how easily, &c., they returned to the vomit. For this is a sign that

a true contrition was before wanting. Besides, a delay is a wholesome means to cure them. Sinners make lighter of their offences, when the remedy appears easy to them, as the Fathers urge. In cases of urgent necessity, as in the article of death, there is no room for delays; accordingly, the sacrament must be then administered, even to the doubtfully disposed, lest they perish for want of it.

4. The devil has, from the beginning of Church, employed all his engines to destroy the virtue of holy penance, by labouring to enervate its discipline, and thus, by seducing sinners into a false idea and practice of repentance, deprive them of the only plank, the only means of salvation, that remains for them after their misfortune. The zealous pastors of the Church have, from the first ages, strenuously opposed this danger; ever complaining, that many deceived by it, both confessors and penitents, run blindfold together into the eternal precipice. In the time of Charlemagne several penitentials were abolished, which began openly to creep abroad, dispensing men, as it were, from the gospel-law of penance, and tending, by a false peace, to lead them into final impenitence. But could there be ever a greater reason for this complaint, than in this unhappy age, in which many pretend to be penitents, still retaining the same sinful affections and disorders, concealed lurking in their hearts? Is not this a calamity, which well deserves the fears of all who have any love for Jesus Christ, or any respect for his holy mysteries? O ministers of Christ! what shall you answer to the Saviour of the world, when he, coming to judge the world at the last day, will require at your hands those souls redeemed by his blood, which your neglect or interested complaisance shall have plunged into a miserable damnation? You are not, indeed, to act with a spirit of harshness, but with mildness towards sinners, being the disciples, and even, in some degree, the fellow-labourers of him, who made it his delight to converse with, and chiefly by his divine meekness, gain and save sinners. Woe to any who should, by austerity, alienate them from their salvation, instead of bearing their burthens with them, to raise them out of their miseries. "But woe also to those who go saying, peace, peace, and there was no peace."—Jer. vi. 14. "Woe to them who sow cushions under every elbow, and pillows under the head of every age to catch souls, and when they caught the souls of my people, said they gave life to them. And they violated me to my people for a handful of barley, and a morsel

of bread, to kill souls which do not die, and to give life to souls which do not live, lying to my people which believes lies."—Ezech. xiii. 18, 19. "The prophets prophesied a lie, and the priests clapped with their hands, and my people loved such things. What therefore will be in his end?"—Jer. v. 31. How grievously will the God and loving Redeemer of souls reproach, in the fury of his anger, such prevaricating ministers? I have raised you, will he say, to a function greater and more divine than the ministry of my angels; I have associated you to my priesthood, and to the authority I acquired to myself by my death and resurrection, giving you power and an order to remit sin to true penitents, to consecrate my body, and to preach my Gospel; but you have adulterated my word, and profaned my sacraments. I made you the dispensers of my graces, and the distributors of my most precious gifts to men, and at the same time gave you severely in charge to be prudent and faithful in your dispensation, not to give holy things to dogs, nor to throw my jewels before swine. How then have you, by ignorance, neglect, false mildness, softness, or criminal compliance, filled my Church with abominations and sacrileges? You ought to have defended the honour due to my mysteries and altars, to the loss of your blood, by the severest deaths; how then have you had so little zeal for them as to have yourselves polluted them by admitting to my table those, who wanted the nuptial garment, and betraying me into the hands of hypocrites and my known enemies?

The second General Council of Lateran, under Pope Innocent II. Can. 22, A. D. 1139, makes this just complaint, and gives all pastors this serious warning: "Because, amongst other things, there is one which above the rest disturbs the Church, viz., false penitence; we admonish our fellow-brethren and priests, that they suffer not the souls of the laity to be deceived by false penances, and dragged into hell."

5. But penitents, by importunities and impatience, extort from them absolutions. How little do they consider that they are only delegates, and their absolution only a new enormous crime, if it be not conformable to the sentence of him in whose name they pronounce it? St. Cyprian compares such persons to sick patients seized with a frenzy, who refuse all remedies and applications which might cure them, and are even angry at their physicians and friends for their care of them; Tr. de Laps., p. 93, Ep. 47, p. 196, ed. Pam. He adds: "It is out of tender-

ness for them that he would have their reconciliation delayed and tried, lest, instead of pardon, God be more offended;" Ep. 17, ib.; and that "such pastors are really the butchers of their sheep;" Ep. 15, p. 195. When the persecution had ceased, and afforded the faithful some respite, he calls the ease with which certain sinners would extort an absolution a second pit to destroy souls. "A new kind of destruction is arisen; and as if the storm of the persecution had not raged with sufficient desolation of souls, a treacherous evil and a mild death has succeeded under the title of mercy, to complete the misfortune. Against the severity of the Gospel, against the law of the Lord and God, by the rashness of some, the communion is restored to the unworthy; a peace false and null, dangerous to those who give it, and which will not profit them who receive it."—Tr. de Laps., p. 91. The clergy of the Church of Rome, Ep. 30, Pam. 30, Fell. to St. Cyprian, confirm his maxims, and say: "Where can the remedy of pardon take place, if the physician himself, stopping imperfect penance, flatters and yields to the dangers? If he only covers the wound, this is not to cure; but, to speak the truth, to kill." And St. Ambrose, l. 2. de Pœn., c. 9, p. 380: "Some ask for penance, so as to expect they should be immediately reconciled. They do not seek to be absolved, but only to bind the priest with themselves. For they do not cleanse their own consciences, but involve the pries'ts."

Not to copy out whole works, this may suffice to show us what were the sentiments and practice of the Fathers in this particular. They were the guides given us by God, to conduct our souls to the true land of promise; the greatest doctors and interpreters of his law, who were instructed in its genuine spirit by the apostles, and by the Holy Ghost. Unless we could pretend to have some new Gospel since their time, we cannot reject their morality and rules of penance. Ah! true penitents, on the contrary, desire to be treated with rigour, better to obtain the divine pardon for which they sue. These were the dispositions which the pastors in the primitive ages required before they granted absolution. Whence St. Ambrose writes, l. 1. de Pœnit., c. 16, p. 365, t. 4: "I will that the sinner hope long for pardon, that he ask it with weepings, and with the tears of the whole congregation; and when his reconciliation shall have been deferred a second and a third time, that he believe his supplications had been too remiss, let him in a more miserable plight redouble his fears, then return, prostrate lay hold of the

priest's feet, kiss them, wash them with tears, and not let them go, that Jesus may say of him: "His many sins are forgiven because he loved much." I have known some, who in penance have furrowed their face with continual streams, and hollowed their cheeks in trenches with incessant weeping, have strewed their body on the ground before all, to be trampled upon by every one, and have carried by their pale, attenuated countenances, an image of death in their living bodies." St. Gregory Nazianzen, Or. 39, p. 636, says: "If the Novatians, in denying reconciliation to sinners, only rejected those who had not given sufficient proofs of a change of life, and a penance proportioned to their offences, their doctrine and practice would have been that of the Catholic Church, and that he condemned none such." All zealous pastors followed this rule, which St. Gregory the Great, 1. 6. in 1. Reg., lays down: "Then we see a sinner truly converted when he labours to efface what he confesses with his mouth by a condign austerity." They feared not only false penitence, but also, lest too great a facility should be an occasion of relapses. "If a man soon return to his lost felicity, it would seem a pastime to him to fall into death by sin," as St. Augustine writes, Serm. Ol. 35, de Div.

6. There is a third part of the sacrament of penance, besides contrition and confession, which regards the penitent, viz., satisfaction. Baptism remits sin, without any chastisement being exacted by God in the condition of its pardon. But the case is very different in the remission of sins committed after baptism. As they are more enormous, God makes it a clause in granting this mercy, that they do not go entirely without some chastisement to be voluntarily paid by the penitent, by fasting, alms, and prayer, which are hence often said in Scripture to wash away sins, and which are usually mentioned in the Old and New Testaments, as a part or ingredient of penance.

A sincere purpose of performing this satisfaction to the divine justice is essential to penance, both as a virtue and as a sacrament, which without it must be false and counterfeit. Indeed contrition can never be true without it: for he, who truly hates and grieves for his sin, must be sincerely resolved and desirous to expiate and efface it, to satisfy the divine justice injured by it, and to revenge the offence of God on himself, by fulfilling the laws and conditions of his mercy. A man deceived by another into some base crime, when sensible of it, would conceive a great indignation against the author of his misfortune. Penance

inspires this hatred and holy revenge against a man's sin, its author and instruments, the criminal heart and flesh; especially as this is required by God. Therefore, chastisement for sin is a voluntary chastisement of ourselves, to compensate the injury done to God by sin, and to appease him. A will to perform this satisfaction is so essential to penance, that St. Augustine says: "He who truly repents does nothing else than that he does not suffer the evil which he has done to remain unpunished; Ep. 163, Ol. 54, c. 3, t. p. 526. This will implies, first, a firm purpose of amendment of life, of shunning all mortal sin and immediate occasions of it, of practising the necessary means for that purpose, of performing the penance enjoined by the priest, and labouring, by other satisfactory works, to appease the divine justice, and entirely blot out all remains of sin.

7. The confessor is bound always to enjoin, and the penitent to accept some reasonable penance, both in satisfaction for sins, and often to serve as a remedy against a relapse; for the priest is both judge and physician. As a remedy, St. Gregory observes, the virtues contrary to each sinner's vices are to be prescribed, as alms to the covetous, prayer to the slothful, acts of humiliation to the proud, bodily mortifications to the unchaste, and, for a part, reading or short reflection on the last things, &c. No indulgence or jubilee can dispense from the injunction of all penance in confession, though it may be a reason for giving a lesser; for nothing can strip the sacrament of one of its parts, or exempt men from the precept of doing penance on many accounts. It may be prescribed to be performed either before or after absolution. If after, it is commonly designed to be performed in the state of grace, or at least in a spirit of penance. At least, if a penitent should relapse, he ought, every time before he performs any part of it, to renew some kind of an act of contrition. It cannot be performed by another person, but by the penitent himself. A considerable delay or omission in doing it would be a mortal sin, though it would not make the past confession null and sacrilegious, if it was made with a sincere contrition and purpose of satisfaction.

A confessor is bound to impose a penance proportioned to the quality of the sin, and the ability and circumstances of the penitent; by giving too mild ones he would make himself a partaker of his crimes, as the Council of Trent warns us, Sess. xiv. c. 8. To which purpose St. Chrysostom describes, in a very terrible manner, the dangers of the priestly charge; De Sacerd.

l. c. 4, t. 1, p. 374. He is in this to have some regard to the penitential canons, though conforming himself to the present discipline of the Church, which condescends very much to the weakness of her children. Hence, in regard to the more slothful, he may sometimes follow the rule of Gerson (Tr. de Parvul. ad Christ. trahend.), who repeated with William of Paris: "I had rather suffer them to fall into purgatory by too small a penance, which will be faithfully accomplished, than that they should go to hell with a greater, never sufficiently performed." It is the observation of St. Chrysostom, (loc. cit.): "That many, by a smaller penance in the beginning, may be insensibly brought to perform well a greater at last, which at first they were not able to bear." It was also the saying of an ancient pastor, related in the Canon Law (Op. Imp. in Mat. Hom. 43): "If I err in giving rather too small a penance, is it not better of the two to give an account for an excess in mildness than in austerity? If God be mild, how is the priest too rigid? Be austere towards thyself, but mild to others." But there is far more danger of sinning in this point by remissness. To supply the insufficiency of present penances, he may do something for the penitent, by undertaking austerities for him himself, as St. Francis Xavier did in some such cases.

He must always admonish the penitent with strong exhortations, that he is bound, by voluntary satisfactions, to labour to supply what his injunctions are deficient in; and he may, by his intentions, raise them to a higher value, making them in some degree sacramental, by directing to this the prayer of the Church after absolution, &c., which is advised by St. Antoninus, St. Thomas of Villanova, &c. "He is an unskilful physician who, pressing the swelling imposthumes with too gentle a hand, and whilst he retains within the amassed corruption, increases the sore. The wound is to be opened and cut, and to be healed with deep incisions. Let the patient cry out, weep, and complain under his pain; he will afterwards thank you, when he shall find himself cured." One of them thus addresses himself to such pretended penitents: "The sacrilegious man is angry with the priests, because he does not immediately receive the body of the Lord with polluted hands, and drink his blood with a defiled mouth. O what extravagant frenzy in you, furious madman! You are angry at him, who labours to turn from you the anger of God; you threaten him who entreats the mercy of the Lord for you; who feels your wound, which you yourself do not feel; who sheds tears for you, which perhaps you do not shed for yourself."

8. The penitent is to remember that he, who truly repents, does not fear the labour of penance, as St. Bernard says, l. de Grad. Humil., c. 78. They who seek indulgent confessors, to avoid proportioned penances, are guilty of a mortal sin of sacrilege, no less than those who indulge them. Such make a traffic of penance, and cannot have a true contrition any more than the devil, says St. Bernard, Serm. 35, t. 3. Let such persons remember, that St. Boniface of Mentz, St. Raymond, St. Vincent Ferririus, St. Bonaventure, Gerson, and other more modern great confessors, would order three or seven years' penance, fasting three days in the week on bread and water, or wearing a hair shirt, or the like, for one mortal sin. Let them remember the more severe penitential canons of the first ages. We have no new Gospel since those times. Penance is the same; sin is the same; God and his law are the same. If the tribunal of the Church is milder, this is owing to our weakness; and it only leaves it to us, by voluntary endeavours, to pay this debt to the divine justice.

We are then to receive the penance enjoined us in confession most willingly and humbly, confessing in our hearts how much too light it is for our offences, and sincerely resolved speedily and exactly to accomplish it, in the most fervent spirit of devotion and penance, purposing to labour to supply its deficiencies by a constant practice of penance. We must receive the sentence of absolution, renewing in our souls the deepest sentiments of humility, compunction, love, gratitude, and resolution of serving God for ever with the most inviolable fidelity. We must repeat these sentiments more explicitly after confession, and, big with the most feeling sense of these dispositions, pour forth our souls, especially in thanksgiving and praise for the inestimable mercy we have received, congratulating ourselves on our present happiness; renewing our most sincere resolutions of never more injuring the divine goodness by consenting to sin; of avoiding all dangerous occasions, and practising all the most powerful means to preserve ourselves from falling again into such a misfortune. This amendment of life, and the necessary measures to effect it, such as assiduous prayer, frequent use of the sacraments, the nourishing a constant spirit of penance, by repeating daily acts of hatred and sorrow of sin, penitential mortifications, &c., are the principal and most essential part of the penance to be continued to the end of our lives, and what after confession we must chiefly be solicitous about. Our earnestness on this point will be the chief proof that our conversion was sincere. Can he be

looked upon to be sincerely reconciled, who is not earnest to avoid a repetition of his past offences and treasons? Who, just recovered from a dangerous sickness, is not careful to secure himself against a relapse? Not to dread in the highest degree, and arm ourselves with all possible care against a relapse into sin, is a sure mark that our conversion was not perfect.

9. The penitent is not to imagine that, when he has performed the prayers and acts after confession, all is over, that his task is done, and that he needs not think any more of his past sins. It is absolutely necessary that he always remember that he is a sinner, has a great debt to pay, and is bound to lead a life of continual penance; first, to satisfy the divine justice. And if he neglect this, how was his will of satisfaction sincere in the sacrament? How was the contrition true, which is followed by no fruits? Secondly, a penitential course is a necessary means to preserve him from a relapse. The devil, finding a soul empty and ready swept, *i. e.*, void of the fruits of repentance, easily re-enters. This is also the law of penance, and God's express command. St. Ambrose writes thus to a virgin, who had fallen into sin, ch. 8: "Remember that a sinner has incurred the eternal flames of hell. Be content to undergo any afflictions, any labours, providing you can be delivered from those pains." Such a life, such an action of penance, if it be perseverant, will afford hope to escape punishment at last. Let the penitent always bear in mind that maxim repeated by St. Augustine, Serm. 278, Ol. 34, de Div. c. 12: "He must be severe upon himself, that God may be merciful to him."* St. Pacian, Paræn., p. 316, says: "They who confess well their crimes in penance, yet do not use the remedy, are like those who lay open their wounds and sores to the physicians, but neglect to do what is prescribed them, and have not the courage to take the potions that are ordered them. This is as if one should say; behold, I am sick; behold I am wounded; but I will not be cured," &c. See Med. 45, on the Virtue of Penance.

10. Every one is to proportion his penance to the number and enormity of his sins. How great and what penance is necessary? "Such as may equal, or even surpass the crimes," says St. Ambrose, ad Virg. Laps., c. 8; and St. Cyprian, de Laps.: "As much as we have sinned, so much let us weep. A deep wound requires a diligent and long cure. Let not the penance be less than the

* In quantum non peperceris tibi, in tantum tibi Deus, crede, parcet.

crime." Hence, St. Augustine writes, Serm. 351, n. 7, p. 1357: "In this penance every one ought to exercise upon himself the greater severity, that being judged by himself he may not be judged by the Lord." "For, if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged by the Lord."—1 Cor. xi. 31. Let a man, therefore, ascend the tribunal of his soul against himself, and place himself before his own eyes. Having thus erected a judgment in his own heart, let his memory be the accuser, his conscience the witness, and fear the executioner. Let such a sentence be pronounced by him, by which he declares himself unworthy of the participation of the body and blood of the Lord," &c. The Fathers then had reason to call this sacrament a hard and laborious penance, with Origen, Hom. 2. in Luc.; a baptism of tears, a severe and laborious laver, with St. Gregory Nazianzen, Or. 39, who cries out, Or. 43: "What an abundance of tears shall we shed, that this may equal the efficacy of baptism?" &c. A true spirit of penance will never think it has done enough. An ancient learned and pious author says very well: "Let a penitent regard all the fruits of his penance as small, as never sufficient to discharge his debt; let him always grieve, always blush before God, against whom he has sinned; let him finish his grief only with his life;" l. de Vera Pœnit. inter op. St. Aug. t. 6, App. p. 238. And Tertullian, l. de Pœnit., c. 9, p. 127: "As much as thou shalt not have spared thyself, so much, believe, will God spare thee. God will pardon only true penitents, and such as chastise sin in themselves."* St. Augustine in Ps. 50, p. 468. Read the examples of St. Thais, and other holy penitents among the saints.

11. To animate ourselves to a condign practice of penance, and to confound ourselves at the sight of our sloth, it will be useful to consider the primitive discipline of canonical penance in the Church. We find it established very early, mentioned by Tertullian and others in the second century, and its four stages described by St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, anno 250, and others. It was maintained for many ages with extraordinary rigour. The backwardness and tepidity of sinners in submitting to undergo it obliged the Church to make indulgences more frequent, and to allow communications of other good works, not so laborious or painful, in the eleventh century; by which the penitential canons, by degrees, were laid aside; though they

* Ignocis confitenti, sed seipsum punienti.

were of some force even in the thirteenth century ; for Humbert, the fifth General of the Dominicans, who died A. D. 1277, mentions the solemn imposition of penance as then in use for grievous sins. Ser. 46. We read the affecting ceremonies of that office, sufficient to soften the most hardened sinner into sentiments of compunction, in the edition of the penitential of St. Theodore of Canterbury, by Le Petit, pp. 21 to 79.*

All persons publicly guilty of any grievous sins, who did not ask, and submit to canonical penance, were excommunicated, and the faithful forbidden to have any intercourse or conversation with them. Sinners confessed first in private. If the priest judged they ought to undergo public penance, they humbly demanded it of the bishop, confessing their sins to him. He took some time to deliberate, and to examine their dispositions. The solemn imposition of penance was on the first day of Lent. The penitent presented himself to the bishop in the church, in old, torn, and ragged clothes; for such were the mourning among the ancient Greeks and Latins. The bishop laid ashes on his head, and gave him a hair-cloth. The penitent then prostrated himself on the ground, whilst the bishop and clergy recited long prayers for him on their knees. After which the bishop made him a strong exhortation, saying he was going to expel him as unworthy out of the church, as God drove Adam out of paradise, but encouraging him with the hope of mercy. He then, with a push, drove him from him, and out of the church; and immediately the doors were shut and locked against him.

Penitents, during their term, kept at home, never going to any markets, fairs, feasts, or diversions, employing their time in labour, prayer, lying on the bare floor, and fasting on bread and water, either every day, or as often in the week as was enjoined. They watched, gave alms largely, and saw no company except on some necessity. On the days of stations or festivals, they went to the church, stood without the doors, begging the prayers of the faithful who entered, standing or prostrate on the ground, in their penitential weeds.

The ranks of penitents were four; the weepers or flentes remained prostrate before the church door, in poor, dirty, rent garments, covered with hair-cloth and ashes, lamentably imploring the prayers of the faithful. These seem to have been the same who were also called hyemantes, because they stood exposed

* See Fleury, Mœurs de Chretiens, n. 20. Bona Liturg., l. 2, c. 7, 16, 17.

to all the injuries of the weather under no cover. The second rank was of the hearers or audientes. These were admitted into the lower part of the church, during the sermon and the gospel; but then immediately turned out with the infidels and heretics, as unworthy to join in common prayer, says St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, Can. 11. The third station was of the prostrate or substrati, which was very painful, on account of the great number of genuflections, prostrations, and other humiliations and rigours which they performed. These stayed in the bottom of the church, not only during the exhortations and instructions, but also during many public prayers, which the bishop recited over them. Before the holy mysteries or sacrifice commenced, the deacon crying out from the altar: "Let the penitents and catechumens go forth;" they were turned out. These were absolutely called the penitents. The fourth station was of the consistentes or standers, who assisted at the entire sacrifice of the mass, with the rest of the faithful, only that they were forbidden to communicate. The bishops often visited the penitents, exhorting, encouraging, and admonishing them, and praying over them. By St. Basil's canons, one for wilful murder passed four years among the weepers, then five among the hearers, seven more among the prostrate, and lastly, four among the consistentes, in all twenty years. For involuntary murder, eleven years. For apostacy, his whole life, receiving absolution only in the article of death. He equals impurities against nature, and adulteries, with murder; but allows women for adultery to pass their whole term among the consistentes, lest a suspicion of their crime might divulge it, and be an occasion of their death. Can. 347. Not only idolatry, murder, and impurity, but most other sins were subjected to the laws of public penance, as appears from the penitential canons. Some* extend this to all mortal sins; but some we find excepted in several churches. Sins of thought only were comprised under the primitive laws, but seem excepted in St. Theodore's penitential, and others of a later date, and private penance and absolution alone allowed for such. No one could be admitted a second time to public penance; and sinners relapsing but once, were excluded from the sacraments till the point of death, to employ all their life in penance. Canonical penance, or a crime which deserved it, was a perpetual irregularity, debarring persons for ever from

* Arnauld; le Drun, &c.

holy orders, or any functions in the Church.* For things looked upon us unseeming and imperfect, though not in themselves sinful, persons were condemned to public penance, as for second marriages to a course of one, or, in some churches, two years' penance. St. Basil reports that the term was to be abridged in favour of a greater fervour, or if the sin was less deliberate.

12. Eusebius relates that the Emperor Philip being a Christian, presented himself to assist at the divine mysteries; but as he had arrived at that dignity through murders, the bishop refused to admit him till he ranked himself among the penitents, and made his confession, in which he obeyed. Hist. l. 6, c. 34, Ol. 37. But we have a more particular and more authentic example of this in Theodosius, surnamed the Great, being one of the most powerful, wisest, and greatest in all respects amongst all the Emperors who ever wore the Roman purple. The city of Thessalonica having raised a sedition, and committed many outrages, because the governor had refused to release a malefactor, who was a famous charioteer, the Emperor, at first, designed to pardon this insult; but Rufin, the prefect of the palace, who was afterwards a great firebrand in the State, persuaded him it was necessary to make an example, and to put a great number of the citizens to the sword. Soldiers were ordered to put this sentence in execution, which they did, with an unheard of cruelty. They massacred seven thousand in the Circus. A slave, offering himself to die for his master, was butchered by them. A father, seeing his two sons led to slaughter, desired to suffer in their place; the soldiers, moved, promised to give him the life of one of them. The father ran from one to the other, as if distracted, not being able to make his choice, or to abandon either, and the soldiers slew them both. St. Ambrose, upon this news, wrote to the Emperor, then absent, modestly reproving the fact, Ep. 59. Theodosius soon after returned to Milan, and went to the church; but St. Ambrose met him at the door, and forbade him entrance. The Emperor excused himself; alleging that David had also sinned. The saint answered: "You have imitated him in sinning; follow him also in his repentance." At this the Emperor, bursting into a flood of tears, threw himself at his feet, begging absolution with many sighs and groans. And rising, he put off his imperial robes, and spent the time prescribed by the bishop in solitude and compunction, in a peniten-

* Read Card. d'Auguire, Diss. 10, Alvap., &c.

tial habit, in his palace, for eight months, from April till Christmas. Desiring earnestly to enter the church on that solemnity, he ceased not to weep most bitterly, repeating to those who came near his person: "The beggars enter freely the holy church, but I have shut it against myself; for the Lord said: Whatsoever you shall bind on earth, it shall be also bound in heaven." Rufin said to him: "I will go and entreat the bishop to loose you." The Emperor judged well by answering: "He will not be moved." St. Ambrose spoke harshly to Rufin, saying: "How have you the face to entreat for a crime of which you were the cause and promoter?" When he said the Emperor was coming, the holy prelate answered: "and I will send him away again. If he will change his empire into a tyranny, I will willingly lay down my life." The Emperor then entered his chamber; but St. Ambrose said to him: "What! do you presume to trample upon God's sacred laws?" "No:" answered the Emperor; "I do not resist or disobey the injunctions you have laid upon me. I do not enter the church by violence, but only beg by God's mercy towards penitent sinners that you take pity on me." St. Ambrose, before he gave him absolution, obliged him to make a law, that no man should be put to death till thirty days after his sentence. Sozomen says, that this Emperor confessed publicly his sin. St. Ambrose, in his funeral oration, relates how he came to the church, kneeling at the door, in the rank of penitents, with his eyes on the ground, repeating with David: "My soul is cleaved to the pavement: Lord, restore my life according to thy word." He tore his hair, struck his breast and his forehead in the bitterness of his sorrow; and, after his reconciliation, passed no day till his death, on which he did not bewail afresh this offence, which he had committed by surprise.

DISCOURSE XXXIX.

ON INDULGENCES.

1. Indulgences, or relaxations of the penitential canons, were often granted, even when they were most rigorously observed. The canons expressly lodged that authority in the bishops, when they should see reason for it, as, *e. g.*, on account of the extraordinary fervour of any penitent. "If any bishops shall be con-

scious of their labour, and humility, and meekness, and shall think proper to allow them any mitigation, the power shall be in them," says the Council of Ancyra, more ancient than the first General Council of Nice, Can. 2, item Can. 5, 22, 35. Also the General Council of Nice, Can. 12; the fourth of Carthage, Can. 75; St. Basil, Can. 2, 7, 54, 84; St. Gregory of Nyssa, Can. 4; St. Innocent I., Ep. 1, &c., express the same authority in bishops.

The like indulgences were usually granted in the beginning of severe persecutions, and on other like occasions. See St. Cyprian, Ep. 54. ad Convert., &c.

Likewise, at the request of the martyrs or confessors in prison for the faith, as appears from St. Cyprian, his Treatise de Lapsis, and in several epistles expressly upon that subject. He indeed complains often, that the too easy and too frequent requests of certain confessors were abusive, and tended entirely to destroy the discipline of penance, so that he found himself obliged frequently to refuse indulgences upon such petitions. Tertullian mentions the same practice, l. ad Mart., c. 1, and becoming himself a Montanist heretic, and denying indulgences, he reproached Pope Zephirinus for it in these words; l. de Pudic., c. 22: "You extend this power to your martyrs, and none purchase the entry of the prisons to them so much as those who have lost the Church. They ask peace of those, who are not secure of their own. It ought to be enough to the martyr that he has purged his own sins. It is the part of an ungrateful and proud mind to scatter upon others, what it is a great benefit that he has obtained for himself. Who, besides only the Son of God, ever ransomed another's death by his own?" From which words it is plain, that the Catholics believed that the communication of the martyr's merits might, by the authority of the Church, expiate the penitent's sins, in lieu of their own personal austerities and satisfaction. And secondly, that these indulgences not only satisfied the Church, but really remitted the temporal punishment due to sin before God. Which also appears from St. Cyprian's frequent complaint, that too easy indulgences, granted without cause, could not satisfy God, or be any more than a false peace. The same is evident from the clergy of Rome, in their letter to St. Cyprian on that subject, Ep. 36, p. 219, in which it is related, that the penitents having received the martyr's requests to the bishop in their favour did not so properly beg as claim their peace, nay said they already had it in heaven.* The clergy refute this, because their

* Imo jam et in cœlis habere se dicerent.

petition was against the Gospel, and, consequently, a decree of assent from the bishop could not communicate to them a real indulgence in that case.

The tepidity and weakness of many penitents grew so great, that after the eighth century the Church, out of a necessary condescension, allowed the bishops more frequently to mitigate or exchange the canonical penances into alms, fasts, &c., where there was a sufficient reason. Thus a Council, held A. D. 895, Can. 59, allowed, in certain cases, that an alms of sevenpence might redeem one day's fasting, when the party was not able to fast. In the eleventh century indulgences, or redemptions of canonical penances, were granted for expeditions in the holy wars, long painful pilgrimages, and for other good works.

2. To understand the nature and meaning of an indulgence, it must be observed, that it is no pardon for sins to come, or a leave to commit sin, as some have accused the Church of holding. It would be a horrible blasphemy to advance that any authority whatsoever, even God himself, could grant such a leave, or dispense in the least sin. Nor is the Catholic doctrine of satisfaction and indulgences anyways derogatory to the sacred passion of Christ; for both are nothing else than the application of its merits to the sinner.* It is a capital article of the Christian faith, that only Christ, true God and true man, was able to offer a sufficient satisfaction and atonement for sin. But he having superabundantly satisfied for all our offences, it depends upon his will, in what manner, and how this satisfaction is to be applied to us; and it has pleased him to do this in baptism, so that it is an entire abolition of sin, without the reservation of any punishment. This is a manner of justifying the sinner, conformable to his infinite goodness and mercy. In penance, for sin committed after baptism, he follows a different rule; for though, upon repentance, he remits the guilt and the eternal punishment due to it, yet it is by exchanging those everlasting pains into a temporal chastisement, which he exacts from such sinners. He was, in some measure, forced to this method, on account of the greater ingratitude and perfidiousness of those, who have abused his first gifts; also that too great a facility of pardon might not be an occasion of such sinners relapsing more easily. Therefore, Christ's satisfaction for us was entire, perfect, and infinite; but it belongs to him, who has purchased us this pardon with his own infinite price, to impart it

* Bossuet's Exposition, &c.

to us on what conditions, under what law, and with what reserves he pleases. A king pardoning a criminal may require of him what conditions he pleases, as David obliged Semei.

We should be highly injurious and ungrateful to our merciful Saviour and the benefit of his redemption, if we should dispute its infinite merit; because, in pardoning the sin of Adam, he has not discharged us of all its consequences, leaving us liable to death and to many corporal and spiritual miseries. It is sufficient for us that Christ has paid the price by which we shall one day be entirely delivered. In the mean time we must receive with gratitude and humility each part of his benefit, waiting the progress of our deliverance, according to the order which his divine wisdom has established for our greater good and the better manifestation of his mercy and justice. In like manner, if he require some conditions on our side in the sacrament of penance, where, in forgiving the sin, he exacts some chastisement to keep us better within the bounds of duty, the satisfying this obligation by painful and laborious works, whether enjoined us by the Church or voluntarily undertaken, has been called by the Catholic Church, from the first ages, satisfaction, though it is only a condition for the application of the satisfaction of Christ. A relaxation of part of this temporal punishment or satisfaction is called an indulgence. This is the clear and full exposition of the doctrine of the Catholic Church, in a point strangely misrepresented and obscured by some; for which reason this statement is borrowed, almost in the very words, from a book approved of by the Pope, and by the voice of the whole Church.

3. An indulgence, therefore, is a relaxation granted by the Church of the temporal punishment due to sins already forgiven. It remits not only the canonical penance enjoined by the Church, but also the punishment, before God, which that penance would have expiated and removed. This is clear from the ancient Councils and Fathers, as from Tertullian and St. Cyprian above. And indeed, if it only remitted the penance before the Church, it would be prejudicial, not profitable to the penitent, only reserving him to severer chastisements from God.

This doctrine of the Church is clearly delivered in Holy Writ. Christ gave to the pastors of his Church the keys of the kingdom of heaven, with the authority of binding or loosing sinners. Matt. xix. 19, and xviii. 28. This power regards not only the guilt and eternal punishment, but also the temporal chastisement of sin, when there should be sufficient reasons, as the tradition of the

Church has ever understood it. St. Basil and the other Fathers had recourse to this sentence of Christ, to show that the bishops could mitigate the canons towards the more fervent penitents.

St. Paul granted an indulgence to the incestuous Corinthian at the prayers of that Church for him, and lest he should be overcome by too great sorrow or dejection. "To whom you have pardoned anything, I also, for your sakes, have done it in the person of Christ," *i. e.*, by his authority.—2 Cor. xi. 10. By this sentence he remitted the remainder of the punishments he had imposed on him, and which he ought to have undergone, which was a true indulgence. See the Fathers on this passage: St. Chrys. Hom. 4. in 2 Cor.; Theodoret, ib.; St. Ambrose, l. 1. de Pœn., c. 6; St. Pacian, Ep. 3, &c.

4. In granting an indulgence the Church applies, for the remission of part of the temporal punishment due to sin, the inexhaustible treasure of Christ's merits; which power she received from him, not to be used at random, but by a prudent dispensation, and when there is a sufficient cause, *e. g.*, at the joint intercession of the faithful. Thus did St. Paul act in regard to the Corinthian, at the entreaties of that Church. Thus did the bishops in the first ages, at the prayers of the martyrs. Thus does the Church now grant indulgences to particular persons, considering the joint prayers of multitudes of God's servants, applying the merits of the whole to those who stand in need of a greater satisfaction; and this by virtue of the communion of saints, by which all in the state of grace are partakers in each other's good works. Those who would take scandal at this doctrine do not consider that the merits of all the members of Christ are nothing but from and in the merits of their sacred head, which alone are applied by all the means by which we can draw down his mercy and graces on ourselves or on others. Nor do they consider that God often inspires his servants, as he did Moses and the prophets, with a desire to humble and afflict themselves in fasting, sackcloth, and ashes, not only for their own sins, but for those of their whole people, and that he mercifully accepts the humble sacrifices and voluntary mortifications of some to diminish the chastisements which he prepared for others or for the whole people; which shows that, appeased by some, he is pleased to be made propitious to others, honouring by this means his Son Jesus Christ in the communion of his members, and in the holy society of his mystical body. For this the ancient penitents were taught so earnestly to solicit the prayers of the rest of the faithful, to which, also, the bishops recommended them frequently. Whence St. Augustine, in a sermon

to his people in Ps. lxi., showing a man to them who had believed in superstitious books of judiciary astrology, tells them that after his earnest repeated entreaties, and a long trial to examine the sincerity of his repentance, he had admitted him to enter a course of public penance for the pardon of his sins; adding, "Pray for him through the merits of Jesus Christ; make him partaker of the prayers which you will offer to the divine majesty: for we know and are assured that your prayers will efface all his sins."—T. 4.

5. The most solemn, ample, and universal indulgence is that called a jubilee. Amongst the Jews every seventh year was holy, and called sabbatic, during which it was unlawful to till or sow the ground; whence the name, sabbatic, indicating that the land was to rest for that year. But after seven times seven the fiftieth year was the most sacred, and called the Jubilee. In this year not only all tillage was forbidden, but it was also ordained that all Jewish slaves should be set at liberty, and that all lands which had been sold, or in any other manner alienated, should be restored to their first owners. See Lev. xxv. This jubilee year was a figure of the deliverance of mankind from the slavery of sin and of the devil by Jesus Christ, as the Fathers agree, and as appears from the manifest allusion to it in a prophecy concerning the Messias in Isaiah, lxi. 1, 2, which Christ declared accomplished in himself. Luke, iv. 18.

The Popes are accustomed to grant, during the whole course of every twenty-fifth year, a plenary indulgence, with the most ample privileges to all confessors, of dispensing in certain vows and cases usually reserved to the superior pastors of the Church; and this is now commonly called a jubilee of the New Law, as in it, it is hoped, that the slaves of the devil and of sin may be restored to perfect liberty, and all their debts remitted. The term was at first every hundredth year; it was afterwards reduced to fifty, then to thirty-three years, and at last fixed at twenty-five. The conditions to obtain it were formerly a pilgrimage to Rome; visiting there devoutly every day, during fifteen days, the three principal churches of that city, and the Christian world; praying for the exaltation of the holy Church, the extirpation of heresies, the peace and concord of sovereigns and states, and the salvation and tranquillity of the Christian people; together with sacramental confession and communion. Pilgrimages performed in a spirit of rambling and dissipation, out of curiosity, vanity, sloth, or other human views, are vicious rather than works of virtue. Even with the best intentions, they are unlawful to

many, whom necessary affairs, or duties to a wife, family, &c., require to remain at home. Many Councils have condemned abuses in pilgrimages. St. Gregory of Nyssa justly reprehends them, though he approves of pilgrimages devoutly performed; Vit. 3, Macrin., p. 177. He testifies that the sight of the holy places had filled his soul with sentiments of piety, joy, and pleasure, Ep. ad Eustathiam, Ambrosiam, et Basilissam, p. 1088. And it is well known, that no one ever did more to embellish and recommend devotion to the tombs of the martyrs. But, as St. Jerome says (Ep. ad Paulin., p. 563, t. 4): "It is not commendable to have been at Jerusalem, but to have lived well at Jerusalem." Yet no one could more extol devotion to the holy places, and pilgrimages to them, than the same holy doctor, who chose his retreat among them. See Ep. 86. ad Eustoch., p. 673, Ep. ad Desider., p. 562, &c. We may see his sentiments in the letter of his spiritual daughters Paula and Eustochium to Marcella; where they say, that it would be too long to name all the eminent bishops, martyrs, and most holy and learned men, who, from our Lord's ascension, had in every age gone to Jerusalem, thinking that something was wanting to their religion, and that they had not finished their career of virtues, unless they had adored Christ in those places, p. 550, and that the most holy men among the Gauls, the remote Britons, the Armenians, Persians, Indians, Ethiopians, Egyptians, Asiatics, &c., flocked thither in crowds, &c. The writings of St. Cyril of Jerusalem, the life of St. Porphyry of Gaza, &c., furnish us with early testimonies and examples of those pious pilgrimages to Jerusalem. Eusebius, the oldest Christian historian extant, relates (Hist. l. 6, c. 11), that St. Alexander, a bishop of Cappadocia, came to Jerusalem, by a divine admonition, to visit and pray in the holy places. St. Chrysostom (l. Quod Christus sit Deus, t. 1, p. 570, n. 9) says: "In Rome, emperors, consuls, and commanders of armies run to the sepulchres of the fisherman and tent-maker." He expresses his most ardent desires of visiting, devoutly venerating, and kissing them. Hom. 32. in Rom. t. 9, p. 757. The example of saints, emperors, kings, and especially of our kings of the Saxon race, who have devoutly performed this pilgrimage to Rome, ought alone sufficiently to demonstrate, that, if piously undertaken and fulfilled, it is a good work and an act of religion.

Devout pilgrims make the journey in a laborious, painful manner, many on foot, many barefoot, employing much of their time on the road in prayer and meditation.

The sight of the holy instruments of Christ's passion and other great relics, and of the places themselves consecrated by the blood of many martyrs, must inflame a Christian heart with ardent sentiments of devotion, as experience shows; for the presence of such objects is the most moving sermon to a devout mind. If Seneca expresses his feeling remembrance of the great Scipio Africanus, from the sight of his house, gardens, &c., must we not confess, that the most lively images and remains of the great mysteries of our redemption cannot fail to fill a Christian soul with the most awful sentiments of religion? It must also be an act of religion to visit and honour them. Add, that the blessing of the chief pastor and father of the Christian world, the principal church, and the centre of Catholic unity, are objects of religious veneration. The joining in the universal assembly of the Church, in prayer, is a kind of besieging Almighty God, and an acceptable violence offered to him to disarm his justice, and draw down his mercy, as well as a homage the more honourable to him, as it is the more public and universal. Hence, in the Old Law, God himself commanded, that every male amongst the Jews should appear in the temple thrice every year, viz., on the three great festivals. Deut. xvi.

But as such a pilgrimage is to many impossible, to others unlawful, often dangerous, and a work of supererogation to all, the Popes usually extend the privileges and indulgences of the jubilee to all distant places the year following. Extraordinary jubilees are sometimes granted on other great public occasions; but these never perfectly equal the solemnity or all the privileges of the holy year.

A jubilee differs from other plenary indulgences, inasmuch as it is more universal and more certain, being grounded on greater causes; and as the ample privileges of certain dispensations are annexed to it, which are to be learned from the bull of the indication of each jubilee.

A plenary indulgence is a relaxation not of the whole of the canonical penance; but on strong proofs of sincere repentance, and after the performance of penitential works, of such parts of it as have not yet been accomplished, and of a proportional part of the temporal punishment of sin, which it would have expiated.

Indulgences of forty, a hundred, &c., days, are a relaxation of a canonical penance of so many days, and of the temporal punishment corresponding to it.

Indulgences applicable to the dead differ very much from the

others; for the Church having no jurisdiction over the dead, who are no longer its subjects, they are not any sort of absolution; but merely an application of the treasure of the Church or merits of the faithful servants of God, through the communion of saints, by way of suffrage or prayer only; nor is their effect as certain as in the others. Hence, neither the Pope nor any ecclesiastical authority can free souls out of purgatory, as the enemies of the Church jeeringly object; for these indulgences only serve to make prayers and sacrifices more powerful in their favour; nor would they be valid, if granted unreasonably, without cause, and in such a manner as any ways to obstruct the laws established by God for the manifestation of his justice; which laws are not infringed by the reasonable interposition of his mercy, when there is sufficient cause, any more than reprieves or privileges on extraordinary occasions obstruct the execution of justice or laws in a temporal court.

Indulgences are usually granted upon the same reasons, as we find in the earliest antiquity, viz., through the intercession of the martyrs and saints, and the communication of their good works; or the joint prayers of the faithful, for this remission of the debts of sinners to God. This reason seemed just to St. Paul; this, the pastors of the Church, in the several ages of its discipline, looked upon as sufficient. Thus, at present, indulgences are granted at great assemblies of the faithful in prayer, and to confraternities, in which all enrolled are partakers, in a particular manner, of one another's good works, as is the case in those annexed to certain religious orders, and also to simple confraternities, as that of the name of Jesus; in which, amongst other indulgences, one of a hundred days is granted for stopping blasphemers, swearers, &c. Thus indulgences are most frequently granted for some cause, greatly tending to promote some virtuous practices, and joined with many other holy endeavours, to which a spiritual recompense and supply are added from the treasure of the Church by him, to whom God has committed the dispensation of it on earth. One hundred days' indulgence was granted by Pope Gregory XIII., and some ancient Councils, to all who devoutly accompany the viaticum to the sick.

A great reason of indulgences also is, to recompense the extraordinary fervour of a penitent, or to supply his impossibility or weakness in satisfying for his sins, whilst he earnestly desires to do it to the utmost of his power, as in the article of death, or anciently in the commencement of violent persecutions.

St. Bonaventure, Cardinal Bellarmine, &c., teach, that indulgences are null, if not founded on causes, which bear some degree of proportion to them; otherwise the discipline of penance would be enervated by too great a profuse concession of them. The treasure of the Church is committed by God to its chief pastor, to be administered according to his holy laws, not to annul and destroy them. This would not be a faithful dispensation, but a cruel dissipation, to use the words of St. Bernard, l. 3. de Cons., c. 4, of too easy and excessive a concession of indulgences. St. Cyprian (Tr. de Laps., p. 173) writes: "Communion is given to inconsiderate penitents by the rashness of some, against the severity of the Gospel, against the law of the Lord God; a peace false and null, dangerous to the givers, and not to be of any profit to the receivers." The authority given by God is not unlimited; the pastor of the Church is but his delegate, and is tied down to follow his laws. If he exceed his commission, the Supreme Judge will not ratify what is done against his will, though it is to be hoped that he will not permit his vicar to commit such abuses. The Provincial Synod of Cambray orders curates to admonish their flocks, that no credit is to be given to books publishing indulgences for small light things; which decree is more severely repeated by the Provincial Council of Mechlin, A. D. 1570, approved by Pope Paul V. The Council of Trent forbids indulgences to be published, unless revised by the ordinary.

None are to be received but what are authentic. See the Roman Index v. Indulgences, &c.

7. A plenary indulgence or jubilee is an exceeding great mercy offered to us, by which, in case of our sincere repentance, charity, and other good dispositions, the gates of heaven may be as readily opened to us as to the martyrs; a grace which completes and consummates the great work of justification, perfectly purifies our souls, making them without spot or stain, and restores the happy state to which holy baptism had raised them. This is a means not granted to David, Moses, or many other great saints and illustrious penitents; yet God's mercy offers it to us. We fear heavy debts remaining from former sins; we fear new debts, which we daily contract afresh and increase: can we neglect a means of wiping off the whole account by an entire application of the merits of Christ for that purpose? The saints were most fervent and solicitous to partake of the like mercy. Witness St. Charles Borroméo, &c., &c.

8. The conditions, required to obtain the indulgence, are to be

fervently fulfilled. Usually, these are vocal prayer in a certain public place of devotion for the intentions prescribed, and some think explicitly for each; others think it sufficient to pray in general for the intentions requisite. The most common are, for the exaltation of the Catholic Church, the conversion of heretics, and peace amongst Christian princes. This must be done in the state of grace. The other conditions are holy communion on the day fixed, and confession preceding it, within a time near enough for a moral conjunction with this indulgence.

DISCOURSE XL.

ON THE DANGERS OF THE WORLD.

The two great causes of spiritual darkness are, first, sin and the love of creatures; secondly, a neglect of conversing with God, and of sufficient commerce with spiritual things. First: A soul, always occupied on vanity and earthly things, conceives an esteem and love of them. By ever beholding, hearing, tasting, loving, and possessing them, she is filled with them, and becomes blind, deaf, lame, cold, stupid, and insensible to spiritual things. Thus, "the earth has devoured them."—Exod. xv. 12. On which text, Origen, in Exod. ib., writes thus: "When thou seest a man, whose thoughts are all of the earth, who acts for it, speaks of it, desires it alone; doth not look up to heaven, doth not think on the things to come, doth not fear the judgments of God, nor desire his promises; when thou seest such a one, say: The earth has devoured him." Created objects, if loved, have this quality, that they seduce the heart, and then blind the understanding. "For the enchantment of fooleries obscures good things, and the inconstancy of passion perverts sense."—Wisdom, iv. 12. Especially passions and sin blind the soul, wed her to this earth, and extinguish in her the feeling, and blot out the true ideas of heavenly truths. As a little dust or smoke, though it doth not blind, yet injures the sight of the eye; so the least venial sin, the least passion, or the least attachment to creatures, obscures the spiritual sight of the soul, darkens the knowledge of God, and abates the fervour of heavenly desires. Therefore, to dispel the clouds, which the world casts over our souls, we must draw our affections from it; this must be done by self-denial, and the

mortification of all the senses, especially where there is danger of any eager earthly attachment.

The second cause of this blindness is, a want of sufficient diligence in prayer, meditation, and pious reading, by which we might withdraw ourselves from the earth. As this malady is caused by conversing too much with the world, its cure must be wrought by sometimes retiring from it by prayer. St. Ambrose says (l. de Fugâ, sec. c. 5, t. 1, p. 458): "We must, with Moses, put off our shoes, that is, all earthly affections, and fly to the mountains, sequestered from the world." And, in another place (l. de Bono Mortis, t. 5, p. 382): "Our soul must soar on high as the eagle, must mount above the clouds, and penetrate the heavens. The bird which falls low is often taken in nets, or caught in bird-lime, or entangled in snares. So is our soul. There is a snare in gold, bird-lime in silver, a pin in fond affections." If the obstacles are removed, then the divine light will shine upon us.

Again, God is the light. "I am the light of the world; he that follows me walketh not in darkness."—John, viii. 12. The nearer, therefore, we approach to God, and the more we converse with him, the more we are enlightened. Also, by considering well spiritual things, we learn to know and esteem them, and receive a taste of them.

Lastly, God's light and grace are to be obtained by being fervently asked of him, who is the giver of all good gifts, and has ordained prayer to be their channel. We must then ask it, without ceasing, for ourselves and for a blind world. Nothing but prayer can unseal his eyes. "What shall I do to help one, whom his fever has made distracted? Pray for such," says St. Augustine, in Ps. 39. That member must be dead, that feels not its own pain; that patient must be incurable, who is grown insensible of his disease.

What makes the world far more the object of the Christian's hatred and abhorrence is, that it is the declared enemy of God, and of his holy law. Christ everywhere thunders out his curses against it. "Woe to the world."—Matt. xviii. "It hates me, because I give testimony that its works are evil."—John, vii. 7. "I am not of the world."—John, viii. 23. "My kingdom is not of this world."—John, xxiii. "If the world hate you, know it hated me before you."—John, xv. 18. "Because you are not of the world, therefore the world hates you."—John, xv. 19. "They are not of the world, as I am not of the world."—John,

xvii. 16. "I pray not for the world."—Ib. v. 15. "The spirit of truth, which the world cannot receive."—John, xiv. 17.

The apostles could not but deliver the same doctrine with their Divine Master. St. James says: "The friendship of this world is the enemy of God. Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God."—James, iv. 4. And St. John: "Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world. If any man loves the world, the charity of the Father is not in him."—1 John, ii. 15. "The whole world is seated in wickedness."—1 John, v. 19.

When we were enlisted into God's family, we renounced, in our baptismal vows, the world and its pomps no less than the devil. It is, then, an article of our faith, that we are to look upon and treat the world as our open enemy, and the enemy of our God; and that a Christian who loves the world, and is imbued with its spirit, is a prevaricator, guilty of a breach of his allegiance to his God, a renegade, and a traitor.

What are we to understand by this world so hateful to Christ? Not the material frame of this universe, of which God is the author. Not all men who live in it; for God's servants, nay, the apostles themselves would then be condemned. But the number of these is small, in comparison of the great body of mankind, from which they differ in their spirit and manners. Hence, though they live in the world, they are not of the world. By it, then, is meant the great bulk of mankind, who govern themselves by the spirit and maxims of the passions, of the flesh, of the love of vanities and earthly pleasures.

This world is declared the enemy of virtue, and loaden with the most dreadful curses of heaven, because it is full of sin, and all made up of vanity, danger of sin, bad maxims, and a spirit opposite to that of Christ. It is full of sin because seated in wickedness. 1 John, v. All who are of it are represented in Scripture as composing a body of men, who have ranged themselves under the standard of Lucifer, and shaken off the yoke of Christ and his obedience; they are marked with the character of the devil, and as members of his kingdom. Hence, the devils are called the princes of the world. This is the true Babylon described by the prophets, as the retreat of dragons, and the abode of devils; its houses filled with wild beasts, ostriches, and owls, which represent all vices; satyrs dancing in it, and syrens dwelling in its palaces of delights, *i. e.*, devils inhabiting the souls of worldlings. Yet everything in the world is not sin;

and its innocent objects may be made a good use of; but everything in it is vanity and danger, and is made by the wicked an instrument of sin.

"All that is in the world," says St. John, "is concupiscence of the flesh, and concupiscence of the eyes, and pride of life."—1 John, ii. 10. These are the three sources of sin, viz., the pleasures of the senses, covetousness, and pride of life, or love of honours, applause, &c. Everything in the world may be made an object of one of these; and it breathes nothing but what tends to flatter these sources of all the passions, and to inspire their maxims; consequently everything in it is a danger to the unguarded.

It is of the sinful world that the prophet says, "God will rain down snares upon sinners."—Ps. x. 7. What a number of snares must it be filled with for them to be compared to drops of rain! snares upon all ages and degrees; snares in riches and in poverty, in honours and in disgrace, in prosperity and in adversity, at home and abroad. Every one of a man's own senses and faculties lays snares in his way; nor can he make one step without meeting with many. The prophet Jeremiah had reason to cry out (xlviii. 43), "Snares upon you, O inhabitants of the earth!" Did God open your eyes, as St. Athanasius tells us he did St. Anthony's, to see the whole world covered with snares entangled in one another, so that not a step could be made which could escape them, we should exclaim with that holy hermit: "Oh! who shall be able to avoid them all? We heard a voice from heaven which answered, humility." It is only a great distrust in ourselves, fear, watchfulness, and prayer, that can secure us from them. What makes our danger the greater is, that we carry about within ourselves a triple concupiscence, of itself eager to catch at every bait laid in each snare. A man that is carrying gunpowder, how careful, how wary is he to meet with nothing that can set it on fire! I have often admired the most scrupulous and excessive cautions used in that regard in armies, and in powder-magazines; notwithstanding which, accidents sometimes happen. Alas! we carry in our bosom a concupiscence more easily kindled than gunpowder. Can we flatter ourselves with security, whilst we walk amidst the dangers, nay play with them, and delight ourselves in them, without the least precaution or guard? "You love bird-lime, yet hope not to be caught in it," says St. Augustine. How ought we to deplore blind worldlings, when we see them careless and negligent amidst such infinite

dangers? What wonder if the world should be full of the miserable wrecks of souls? Not one ship in a thousand of those that sail in the ocean is lost; nor is one man in a hundred of those that go to war slain; but we may with tears say, how few souls escape in the sea of this world!

The spirit and maxims of the world show still more clearly how much it is an enemy to God, as light and darkness are not more opposite than they are to those of the Gospel. Christ came to destroy the first Adam, whose birth, and consequently inclinations and affections, are earthly, according to the flesh and the instinct of nature, corrupted by its fall. This old man and his spirit still reigns in the world, and is the spirit of the world. The new man, or the man of grace, created and planted by Christ, is built upon the destruction of the former, and is directly its opposite. This studies in all things to crucify the old man with his acts, and to live only by the movements of grace. His spirit, therefore, is the contrary to the former; so are also his acts, inclinations, and maxims, which are in each conformable to their spirit.

If we compare together the maxims of the world and those of Jesus Christ, we shall find the one the very contrast of the other. The world applauds, pursues, and endeavours to inspire all persons with an esteem of earthly grandeur, honours, riches, vain amusements, and delights. These are its beatitudes. Christ teaches to banish the foolish joys of the world, and the pleasures of the senses; to love humility and compunction; to be silent under calumnies, patient and meek under injuries and persecutions; to imitate an infant's simplicity; to hate hypocrisy and dissimulation; to mortify the flesh, and shun everything in the world that is apt to inflame any branch of concupiscence. He preaches the happiness of the cross, and beatifies poverty of spirit, meekness, and the like. If we desire to be disciples and members of Christ, we must be animated and live by his spirit, and have his sentiments. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Jesus Christ."—Phil. ii. 5. "Whosoever have been baptized in Christ, you have put on Christ."—Gal. iii. 27.

It concerns us to examine what our spirit is, that of God or of the world, that we may discover to which of the two we belong. Many Christians are for making a medley of their opposite maxims, and, whilst they would fain reconcile them both together, create to themselves a spirit of their own choosing according to their fancy, which they would flatter themselves not to be con-

trary to that of the Gospel. They pray and detract with the same tongue; frequent both churches and play-houses; give pence in alms, and squander away pounds in vanities; and so as to other things. Such a contradiction in manners shows they are strangers to the true spirit of Christ. The false mother cries, "Let the child be divided."—3 Kings, iii. 26. The world is content to get part of the heart; but God, the true sovereign, will have all; all is his due; and his sanctity can allow no society with the world. Those, then, who find passions, such as pride, a love of ease or pleasures, or the like, reigning in their breasts, though they comply with some duties of religion, and call themselves disciples of Christ, yet in reality belong to the world, and are condemned by him according to the degree in which more or less of its spirit reigns in their hearts.

The world is the more the object of a true Christian's fear and horror, as it is contagious. The holy Scriptures, the Fathers, and all other masters of a spiritual life, and daily experience proclaim aloud, on every side, this its most pernicious quality. In short, three reflections will suffice to set this truth in a clear light. First, on the frequency with which its vanities strike the senses; secondly, on the malignancy of its conversation; and thirdly, on the powerful influence of its example. As to the first, we must remember, that the heart of man has contracted from sin a triple concupiscence easy to be set in a flame; nay, more ready to catch fire than tinder from the contact of a burning coal. This is an inordinate love of whatever gratifies the senses, a secret pride and ambition or itch of any present apparent glittering grandeur, and covetousness, or love of riches. Now, almost everything in the world is to this inward *fomes peccati*, or source of sin, what flame is to touch-wood, unless it be restrained and curbed. Yet its objects of vanity environ us on every side, in an infinite number, and constantly besiege and lay snares to our hearts, as they never cease to strike our senses, and through them assault our hearts. It is an old proverb, that even drops often falling at length make furrows in the hardest stone, as we daily see. What effect, then, will not these objects have on our weak souls, if we consider, on one side, how continually they beat upon all our senses, and on the other, how naturally concupiscence is disposed to receive their impressions. The principles of morality, engrafted in our souls, make, indeed, some resistance; but without an extraordinary watchfulness, courage, and grace, these imperceptible seductions gain the affections, sow their seed,

insensibly extinguish those of virtue, and growing habitual become a second nature. And this is the condition of the far greater part of those, who live in the world, some in a greater, some in a lesser degree.

The ordinary conversation of the world is malignant. For the mouth speaks from the abundance of the heart; and the hearts of the men of the world are filled with its false maxims and spirit. Some philosophers tell us, that a toad is nothing but a compound of poison; for whereas other venomous creatures carry their poison in one part, as in a hollow of the teeth (which in such always hang loose), or in their tail or sting, the toad has nothing in it, either skin, flesh, blood, or other fluid, &c., which is not poisonous as long as it lives. So we may say that the heart of the perfect worldling is a mere compound of the poison of the world. It has greedily received all its impressions almost without resisting any of them, unless by some other passion; thus, its affections become all worldly, and it is made up, as it were, of almost nothing else than its spirit, its errors, and its passions, except some remains of the seeds of virtue, that are not entirely blotted out. These principles of moral virtue still remaining, or at least good-breeding, a fear of losing his reputation, or common politeness, will have sufficient power yet to restrain his tongue from open lewdness and impiety; but must not his whole conversation tend to convey into the hearts of others the images of those objects and passions, of which his own is full? Even if he disguise them under the hypocrisy of some affected virtue, the heart will still betray itself; and if this danger be not perceived the poison will only operate the more surely on even a virtuous hearer, as he will be the less guarded against it. On which account St. Teresa gives it as an important advice, that no one choose a director, whose actions should seem to discover any tincture of vanity; because, even under the most elegant instructions of humility, that would occultly insinuate itself into the hearer, and the more deeply as its dart would be the less suspected. How much more will this be true of a man quite devoured by several passions, how much soever he outwardly conceal them?

The influence of worldly discourse is the greater, as the heart, whatsoever words are used, has a language of its own, and that the most moving, by which it immediately speaks to the heart of the hearer. Dry words may please the ear, and gain applause on any subject, but will not reach the heart; whereas, words spoken

from the heart are sure to strike it home. Moreover, a language from the heart speaks not only by the tongue, but also by the accent, by the looks, by the actions and gestures, and by the whole man at once; and, in like manner, it enters the hearer not only by the ears, but by all his senses together. How powerful must be its stroke upon his unguarded and open heart! If men of the world are not all so totally possessed by a worldly spirit (which God forbid), it must be still granted, that, as they have more or less of it, so their conversation will be more or less contagious in communicating the poison of this spirit. May we not then say of the ordinary conversation of worldlings, what Socrates said of two vain women together, that they were mutually communicating each other's venom to one another?

May we not subscribe to the statement of the Fathers, that the world is the school of the devil? Consequently, whoever is always in its vortex must almost always bear his interpreters and organs, if not speak in his name. But men cry out, where is this general communication in the conversation of the world, if swearers, detractors, lewd and profane talkers be avoided? The danger and crime are not, indeed, so great, when declared libertines are shunned as much as possible; but if we speak of men of the world, that is, imbued with its spirit (from whom we must distinguish men in the world, who are not of it), do not all their discourse and behaviour tend to imprint in others self-love, self-conceit, and the esteem, love, and desires of pomp, riches, and pleasures, together with a hatred and contempt of holy mortification, humiliations, and of whatever they themselves hate and contemn? Is it possible, that such repeated lectures, so strongly dictated and enforced, should not affect unguarded minds? They must insensibly be worked upon, and a passion for earthly goods will expel that Christian moderation with which the true spirit of the Gospel looks upon them, as, on the one hand, gifts of God granted in trust, for the purpose of virtue and charity, and, on the other, as surrounded with dangers and snares. That converse with the world, which seems indifferent, is at best unprofitable, and of great service to the devil, as it accustoms men's hearts to unprofitableness, sloth, curiosity, and amusement.

The contagion of the world is most strengthened by the force of custom and example, which has incredible power in all things, and is here a torrent that violently bears down all before it, not to be resisted but by a firm virtue and strong grace. Even in virtue, the example of one single man will make more converts

than eloquent sermons, as we read of St. Charles Borroméo and others. Lessons by example are perpetual; they never cease, and are never interrupted. They are communicated in a more imperceptible, insinuating way, without the appearance of precept or authority, and enter the heart by all the senses at once. We see the force of custom in the world, in the most indifferent, and even in the most difficult and painful things, and which require the utmost constraint. A comparison of our dresses, manners, and customs with those of China and Japan, or even of the Isle of St. Kilda, or countries still nearer us, and some under the same government, will furnish us with most wonderful instances of this. And is not custom at home, even in things the most superfluous, and sometimes also ridiculous, a law, which no one dares to contradict, and which makes things highly valued or despised by turns, and is the cause of the strongest prejudices of entire nations? If anything be but the fashion, this suffices for all. This influence of custom is much greater in what flatters the passions. Can we then wonder that it is so powerful in the world, in which the lives of men are generally only a display of pride and the triumph of concupiscence, and whose whole conduct proclaims the love, esteem, and felicity of what a Christian is taught by faith to despise, hate, and fear?

What can be the reason why the great truths of our holy religion make so small an impression on Christians? Such is their tremendous importance, and such their undoubted certainty, that nothing is more wonderful than that men, who believe them, should lead lives so little conformable to them. Alas! it is the torrent of example. They see others live in the spirit of the world; hence, they soon forget the pious sentiments they had conceived in fervent meditation, and think they must live as others do. They even strain to its law the very precepts of the Gospel, and behave as if salvation were easy and secure, because they see others do so. It is very difficult and extraordinary for any one to have the courage to single himself out in the fervent service of God, and break through the prejudice of the crowd. Notwithstanding meditations, sermons, alarms of conscience, and frequent calls of God, men still are carried with the stream.

God's mercy has provided us with all-powerful antidotes against this contagion. If vanities assault our hearts through our senses, the visits of grace are no less frequent; these we must open our hearts to, and shut them to the others, hedging them round with the thorns of horror and dread against them. Our senses

are to be restrained and accustomed to denials, by frequent mortification, that they never may seek greedily to be gratified. As to the company of the world, far be it from our hearts to judge any one in particular to be of a worldly spirit; but let us shun long or much conversation with those from whose words or demeanour we fear danger to ourselves, mixing with them only as much as charity and decency may require; and during such company, raising our hearts often with fervour to God, to keep ourselves in spirit with him. Let that be our usual company, by which our hearts may be most improved and warmed in virtue. The less we can have of this, the more leisure we must reserve to converse and renew our spirit with God. In short, our grand preservatives are, mortification, prayer, meditation, good books. The oftener we are exposed to hear vanity, the more diligently must we listen to God.

St. Francis of Sales weighed this with his ordinary holy discretion, when writing to a lady who had desired his advice for the education of two daughters, one designed for a nunnery, the other for the world, he tells her (B. 4, Ep. 46), that the latter required much the greater care to be formed early to virtue, and by the practice of prayer and meditation to be armed against the greater dangers of the world, and enabled to resist its example and false maxims. For, a Christian in the world must be like a rock, beaten on every side by the tempest, yet standing unmoved. St. John the Baptist was sanctified in his mother's womb, yet prepared himself by a most severe penitential life and long solitude before he would appear in the world.

DISCOURSE XLI.

ON THE CONTEMPT OF THE WORLD.

1. Such are the motives which faith suggests to inspire a Christian with a contempt of the world, that one would think it ought to be easy and even natural to him to despise it. But the misfortune is, that few seriously consider them. To recapitulate some heads of them; let us reflect, that the world and its enjoyments are emptiness, vanity, and real evils and trouble. St. Thomas of Villanova, Ser. in Luc. x., compares men, labouring in it, to madmen sweating and toiling to death to push a great

rock out of its place, which if they could do, it would be nothing to the purpose, while they neglected the most important business. Gerson (Serm. contra Avar.) uses another comparison; viz., that men, who seek for happiness in the world, are like fools, who should, with great pains, seek for roses and tulips on nettles and briars, where they could only prick and perpetually wound themselves, instead of meeting with the flower they sought.

2. The world is not only emptiness, but also all treachery and deceit. And it is now so worn out, and its cheats so fully discovered by long experience, according to the observation of St. Augustine, Ep. 45. ad Arment., that it ought long ago to have lost its painted false charms to deceive. Were but its falsehood and miseries truly understood, no one would want any other motives to be weary of it. O traitor world! thou promisest all good, and givest all evils; thou promisest life, and givest death; thou promisest joy, and givest sorrow; thou promisest rest, and behold trouble and disturbance. What advantages have all, who ever adored thee, reaped from thee? Only present toil, anxiety, and misery, and future torments. Oh! wert thou exposed in thy true colours, every one, that beheld thee, would be startled, and fly back from thee. Nah. ii. 7.

3. The world is still more the object of the Christian's horror, because it is the enemy of his soul, and of his God, loaden with his curses. He was obliged solemnly to abjure it, and renounce for ever all society with it, before he could be enrolled in God's service. It, on the other side, studies by all arts and stratagems, and frequently by open violence, to draw him from his allegiance to God, never ceasing in its attacks, by baits and false charms, by threats and terrors, and by false maxims and errors; "amoribus, terroribus, erroribus," as St. Augustine says, l. de Corrept. et Gr., c. 35.

4. Although the world had really something worth our affections, and its goods were true and great, it ought still to be despised for God and his kingdom. It is the law of traffic to renounce less goods to acquire greater, as St. Hilary says in Psal. cxviii.*

Again; a soul is too noble to prostitute her affections on a base world. She is created for God, and capable of enjoying him. "He who is greater than the world can desire nothing of the world," says St. Cyprian, Ep. ad Donat.

* Negotiatio est aliquid amittere ut majora lucreris.

5. If we do not renounce the world, we renounce God: for they are correlative.

Christ our leader, our captain, our king, and our God, has taught us to despise and conquer the world by his example and victory over it. "He who follows Christ, how can he so much as look on the vanities of the world, when he sees Christ has crucified them in his own flesh?" cries out St. Ambrose. Serm. 5. in Ps. 118. He has shown us how contemptible all its goods are, by his contempt and privation of them. "Carendo vilia fecit," says St. Augustine, l. de Vera Relig., c. 16, and to inspire us with confidence against it, he has already conquered it for us. Confide: "I have overcome the world."—John, xvi. 14.

6. But a soul, that truly loves God, and has tasted the incomparable sweetness of his charms and love, wants no other motive to contemn and hate the world; as she finds it a country, which is a stranger to her God, and in which men live in a forgetfulness of him. If she has been employed ever so short a time in it, she is like a young fawn, that has lost its dam; though it be tired and quite spent, it cannot rest, but runs still with all its strength till it find her. "So," says the devout Suso (Dial. 6, p. 37,) "do I fly again to thee, O living fountain! sighing with the most ardent thirst. One little hour with thee is a year. Nay, to have passed one day without thy commerce would seem to a soul, that loves thee, a thousand years." The world and its converse must be all bitterness to such a heart.

7. Happy is he who is not of the world; but far more happy he who, moreover, hears no news of it, knows not what passes in it. It is sufficient for him to know there is a world to pray for, without any further information about it; as the reformed Cistercians at La Trappe, who never hear how it goes on, only pray for it, without any communication whatsoever with it. How charming is the eulogium, which the Roman martyrology gives to our holy princess, St. Editha, consecrated to God in a monastery as soon as born into the world, that she "rather never knew the world than forsook it." She passed through this life always an entire stranger to its vanities and crosses, and to its sins and dangers.

8. Happy are they also who, even later in life, and in a less degree, have fled from the commerce of the world, by renouncing it, and hiding themselves in monasteries and deserts, if they have perfectly forsaken it not only in body, but also in affection and desire, and really entertain or seek no other communication with it than to labour to sanctify it.

The true Christian has his heart fixed only on God and on heavenly goods, remembering he is a stranger here. A traveller looks on all he sees on his road only as passing by, and with indifference; he takes no part in shows, fairs, or other things on his way, any further than to cast an eye upon them, and immediately leave them behind him. That passing glance does not make any impression on his heart; nor does he place his pleasure in them, because he seeks that only at home; his heart is bent on his journey's end. Thus the Christian remembers always, that "he has no permanent city here, but seeks that to come."—Heb. xiii. 14. His heart and his joy are there. He makes a moderate use of the lawful comforts, which God allows in this life, but only as passing, and without setting his mind upon them, considering, as St. Augustine says, De Civ. Dei, l. 22, c. 24, that they are transient comforts of miseries, not objects of enjoyment.

This contempt of the world is compatible with the most affluent temporal fortune, or the highest worldly honours; although in them greater watchfulness and care are requisite, to preserve the heart from being tainted by them. Hence, the holy Esther says of her imperial crown (c. xiv.), "Thou knowest my necessity, and that I detest in my heart the sign of my glory, which is upon my head." And our countryman, the great Alcuin, preceptor of the Emperor Charlemagne, writes thus to the Bishop of Lyons: "Elipandus makes my riches and fortune a reproach, and objects against me the number of my servants and vassals, which is 20,000, not knowing that all depends on the heart. It is one thing to possess the world, and another to be possessed by the world. Some possess riches, but as free and disengaged in their souls as if they possessed them not. Others enjoy none, yet have them in their hearts."

St. Bernard observes, that this degree of being strangers and pilgrims on earth is the first in the contempt of the world, which so far is of precept to all. The second degree in this virtue is to be dead to the world. Of this the apostle says (Col. iii. 3): "For you are dead." One that despises the world may yet be sensible to its losses and pleasures; but he that is dead to it is insensible under them. His heart is so absorbed in God and heaven, that he feels not successes or disappointments, applause or contempt in earthly affairs, so sovereignly does he undervalue them. All things seem equal to him, so totally is he buried in his God, and so intent on him and the seeking only of his most holy will. In these dispositions, St. Francis of Sales exclaimed (B. 4, Ep. 13): "I would not give one glance of the

eye for the whole world. I despise it from the bottom of my heart. I will have nothing but purely for the greater honour and glory of God." And St. Basil thus describes the servant of God (Admon. ad Filium Spirit.) : "Burning with the love of God, and always having heaven in view, he tramples both on the pleasures and frowns of this world. Perpetually going forward towards God, desiring to be dissolved and to be with Christ, all his conversation is in heaven, and he converses amongst men rather as a painted figure." It is a vulgar but strong simile of our pious countryman, Father Hilton, that such a person finds no more pleasure in the delights of the world than in gnawing a dry stick.

The last degree in this virtue is to be crucified to the world. This expresses more than being dead to it ; for it looks upon its honours, applause, riches and pleasures with a loathing and horror. This was the sentiment of St. Paul (Gal. vi. 14) : "By whom the world was crucified to me, and I to the world." Two things crucified to one another must be opposites, and have their backs turned mutually to each other ; or rather this means, that they must be a torture and abhorrence to one another, as the cross is to one hanging upon it. Hence St. Bernard says (Serm. 17. in Quadr.) : "I am dead to other things, but those things, which belong to Christ, find me quick, alive, and ready. All the things which the world loves are a cross to me ; bodily pleasure, honours, riches, vain praise. But what the world looks upon as crosses, to these I am fixed, to these I cleave close."

It is a precept to Christians who live in the world, that they do not love it, or those things that are in it. "Be not conformed to this world."—Rom. xii. 2. But how is it possible to touch pitch and not be defiled by it? to breathe a contagious air, and not draw in its infection? to live in the midst of flames, and not burn? This is very possible through God, who furnishes us with arms and antidotes for our defence and preservation, if we are careful to make use of them.

The first preservative is, that no young persons enter the world, or engage in any state of life in it, till they have, by prayer, meditation, and pious reading, instructed themselves in its more dangerous rencontres and snares, in its company, diversions, public places, &c., and diligently filled their minds with a dread of them, a firm resolution of shunning and being always armed against them, and with the holy sentiments of the Gospel opposite the corruption that reigns in it. These truths

must be so long and seriously pondered, that they may have made deep and lasting impressions on the heart, which can make it impregnable to the maxims and example of the world. Penetrated with a great dread and idea of its dangers and evils, and armed with a steady resolution of being always firm and watchful against them, going into it, they must bear in mind the advice of Jeremiah to the Jews, going captives to Babylon: "Now you shall see in Babylon gods of gold and silver, and wood and stone. Seeing the multitude before and behind adoring them, say in your hearts: Thee alone must we adore, O Lord!"—Bar. vi. 5. Thus meeting dangers, they must fervently renew in their hearts their resolutions, and the remembrance of the fidelity which they owe to God, against the world.

How contrary to this is the disposition in which most persons enter the world. They go into it without precaution, fear, or apprehension. Blind, weak, and without experience, as they are, of its snares, they think themselves wise and strong enough to resist any evil, and wanting neither light to discover it, nor force to overcome it; nay, what is far more fatal, they go with the desire to court and invite its flattering charms, and to indulge themselves in its delights, to the edge of the precipice, as if able then to discern it, and stop the fall. They go with pleasure and inclination as into the country of their promised happiness and liberty; they go with hearts open, and even greedy to suck in its poison. Such persons are a willing and sure prey to it, as the only preservative against it is a true knowledge of its dangers, and a saving fear and distrust, which will always keep the heart timorous, watchful, and shut against them.

But the preparation alone cannot suffice. A general, marching into an enemy's country, not only provides himself with the means to enter it safely, but also takes his measures how to secure himself through it, by shunning the more dangerous places, watching to discover all secret ambuscades, and preserving everywhere a communication for fresh supplies and daily provisions. Also, men going into a city infected with the plague, to secure themselves by a counter-poison, do not content themselves with using it when they first go in, but daily and continually renew the use of it, to fortify their bodies afresh, against the pestilential vapour. So, in the world, meditation must be daily and continual, and always so much the more fervent and frequent, as we oftener hear the voice of the devil, or handle his baits. We must never cease imploring the divine light and succours, by

assiduous prayer, and nourishing in our hearts a just hatred and fear of the world, and a contempt of its grandeur, riches, pomp, and pleasures, by considering their impiety, dangers, and vanity, and also, the life and spirit of Christ, his opposition to, and maledictions upon the world. To lose his idea of it would be to certainly perish by it.

It will be a powerful help, if we often reflect what idea we shall have of things at the hour of death, and conceive the same at present. Ah! what will then be our sentiments? If we have ever seen a friend in the last moments, we might have observed that riches, reputation, honour, or power, how fond soever he may have formerly been of them, then lost all their influence upon his heart, and appeared to him like dust in the balance, without weight and without consideration. Only what relates to eternity and virtue seemed to him to deserve any real attention. Then things will appear to us in their true light; labours for virtue as nothing in comparison to the prize; the enjoyments of the world as nothing but smoke and emptiness. Dom. Austin, a pious monk at La Trappe, cried out at the point of death: "Now I understand how God's elect will be transported with joy at the judgment-seat of Christ, when they shall clearly see by what nothings they were made eternally happy."

We must occupy our hearts much on God and on spiritual things. If our thoughts are employed always on the earth, our affections will become clogged with it. But if we fix the eye of our soul on heaven, we shall raise our affections thither, and forget, despise, and hate this world. If a stranger goes into a dungeon, the gaoler burns in it frankincense or some scented berries to preserve him from the disagreeable smell of the place, and from the infection of the close air putrefied by the prisoner's breath, and carrying the contagion of the gaol-fever. So our hearts must burn with frequent aspirations to God, to be preserved by his sweetness from the stench and contagion of the world.

Virtue is courteous to all, yet shuns the dissipation caused by too great hurry and converse with men. It studies, indeed, to be all to all, and to conform itself to the innocent dispositions and discourse of others, as the angel did who conducted young Tobit in a human shape; but like him it uses an invisible armour, raising its affections frequently to God, amidst its worldly conversation and employs. And, though humane and obliging to every one, it shuns, with all possible care, the company of those whose discourse or behaviour is notoriously vicious

and worldly; for through such company even a saint would imperceptibly imbibe the maxims and spirit of the world.

Patience and joy under tribulations, and voluntary mortifications, are a great means to draw our hearts from the world. "When mothers would wean their children," says St. Augustine (Serm. 311, t. 5, p. 1255), "they anoint their breasts with aloes that the babe, offended by the bitterness, may seek the breasts no more. God, in his mercy towards you, has, for this purpose, filled the world with bitterness, yet you love it still." His sweet providence sows all our roads with thorns, and surrounds us with misfortunes and crosses, all to wean us from a dangerous, criminal world. We must then joyfully make this use of them.

If we are careful by these means to arm ourselves against the charms of the world, God will conduct us safe through its waves, as he did the Hebrews through the Red Sea, without so much as their clothes being wet; he will preserve us in the almost universal deluge, as he did Noe in the general flood; he will protect us untouched in the midst of flames, as he did the three children in the furnace.

DISCOURSE XLII.

ON TEMPTATIONS.

1. It is the important advice of the Wise Man, to be deeply engraved in the heart of every one, especially of those who first consecrate themselves seriously to the service of God: "Son, coming to the service of God, stand in justice and truth, and prepare thy soul to temptation."—Eccl. xi. 1. As Pharaoh persecuted the Israelites, so does the devil the servants of God, to draw them back to his slavery; but with this difference, that whereas his prototype only pursued them to the sea, he never desists in his war against them to the end of their lives. But he assaults more vigorously those who are young in the service of God, and who have but lately freed themselves from his tyranny. It was to teach us this, and to instruct us how we ought to arm ourselves against temptation, that the first circumstance of Jesus' active life was his temptation. He would be led by

the Holy Ghost into the desert, that he might be tempted by the devil. We are astonished and filled with horror, to see that the devil should have the insolence to assault him whose sanctity and unattained virtue he could not have been but a witness of; that the evidence of his divinity should be concealed from him; and that he should be permitted to approach, to tempt, even to carry in the air him who was the co-eternal Son of God, and true God, clothed with human nature. But he who was pleased to suffer himself for us to be reviled, scourged, and crucified by the members of the devil, would also permit himself to be tempted by the devil, that his conflict, victory, and crown might serve for our example, instruction, and triumph.

2. Though we are soldiers, such is our sloth, that we neglect to prepare ourselves for our most important and dangerous warfare. We wish to conquer, yet do not put ourselves in a condition to fight. Jesus, before he was tempted, or entered upon his public life among men, retired into a lonesome wilderness to prepare himself for the combat by solitude, prayer, and mortification, though he stood not in need of those arms for himself, as he was invulnerable; but he would correct our supine rashness, and teach us what we are bound to do, for each of these means is an indispensable precaution for us, yet we neglect them. Instead of shunning the world and its dangers, we often seek them by the dissipation of our heart in worldly conversation, and the liberty we allow to our senses. We are slothful in persevering in fervent prayer for strength and protection, and study not sufficiently to weaken our enemies, both by exterior and interior mortification. What wonder that we are so easily vanquished! Let us condemn our past base sloth, and pray that the Holy Ghost will also lead us into the desert of solitude, and inspire us with a love of prayer and penance, by which we may be made invincible against the tempting spirit. We must prevent his attacks by being always ready and armed. "Apply a remedy before the disorder."—Eccl. xviii. 21.

3. Christ suffered from the devil a triple temptation to the three principal sins by which men are seduced, viz., of gluttony or sensuality, of vainglory, and of ambition and pride; yet so that the prince of pride intermixed in each that vice. In the first, the tempter takes occasion from our Saviour's fast and hunger, and artfully conceals his bait under an appearance of good and of necessity. Thus the spirit of darkness first assails pious souls. He does not, at first, propose any great evil, but

something in which he can gild over the danger or the malice. This is the snare; but under it he has more fatal views; he knows how impossible it is to ruin a virtuous soul all at once, but that if he can unwarily draw her from her duty in a small thing, and strip her of her arms, she will afterwards be easily made his prey. Alas! some party of pleasure, a certain company, an affection for a person, seems in the beginning only natural or even virtuous, or as a necessary part of decency; but if we take the fair bait, we shall soon find this affection changing into a blazing, furious passion. How many good souls have thus perished, because they did not see or suspect the first snare! The devil tempts to gluttony in different ways. To the voluptuous he promises the pleasure of sensuality; the needy he solicits to injustices; the virtuous he attacks under some pretence of piety, as he seduced the prophet into a transgression by a pretended revelation. 3 Kings, xiii. Thus he attempts to persuade Christ to break his fast by a miracle: "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread."—Mat. iv. 3. The suggestion is very subtle. A miracle might be lawful, but not when superfluous, or demanded only for vanity. To break so long a fast might seem just and necessary; but not in the manner proposed, or by yielding to the hunger out of gluttony. Christ, by humility, discovers and defeats the fiend's artifice, expressing a confidence in God's providence, and leaving to him the manner by which he should be fed, refusing to be hasty in satisfying hunger, or to work a miracle for so unnecessary an end, and which could not be required for his Father's honour. "It is written," said he, "not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."—Mat. iv. 4. He could not be drawn either by the crafty art of Satan, or by the pain of hunger, which he made use of to tempt him by, to lay aside that indifference with which he regarded his body, or to cease from the steady contemplation of the divine word, which is our spiritual necessary food, and which had been his only nourishment in the desert. And he defeated the suggestion of necessity; though we make imaginary necessity of place, company, complaisance, &c., serve for excuses, which we ourselves could never allege if not blinded by passion.

4. The devil, seeing Christ impregnable to every assault from the necessities of the body or the senses, turns his battery, and attacks him with spiritual temptation of vainglory and pride.

Here, to be better disguised, he transforms himself into an angel of light, and tempts him to ostentation under a miracle, under pretence of giving a proof of his divine mission. As the Holy Ghost had led Christ into the desert to decline applause and dissipation, the evil spirit carries him into public, and in the midst of Jerusalem places him upon the pinnacle, *i. e.*, the highest flat roof, or battlement, of the Temple, a place of very great height as well as of unparalleled stateliness and magnificence. Here he solicits him to perform a glorious miracle in public, as he had refused to work one in private, saying to him: "If thou be the Son of God cast thyself down; for it is written: That he hath given his angels charge over thee; in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest perhaps thou shouldst hurt thy foot against a stone." He reminds him of the singular protection promised by God to all his servants, particularly to his Son, the Messias, doubting if Jesus was he, and proposes to him a thing, which does not seem criminal, and was covered with an appearance of good, hereby to draw him from the designs of grace, and secretly also to engage him to a titillation of vanity in such a glorious action. But humility easily discerns the spirit of vanity. "Where humility is there also is wisdom."—Prov. xi. 2. Pride is always caught; it is easily deceived, and easily deceives itself. The tempter often solicits us to evil under a cloak of virtue. He often persuades us that pusillanimity is humility; that weakness or human respect is charity or Christian condescension. We mistake the falsehood for the truth, and embrace the illusion, unless by humility, prayer, and mortification we obtain from God the light that opens our eyes and scatters the mist. Christ had so far humbled himself as to permit himself to be carried by the devil. He came to save the world not by glory, applause, and outward greatness, but by humiliations and the cross, a remedy suitable to our wound, which is pride. He, therefore, rejects the seducer; adding that it is forbidden to tempt God by asking a superfluous miracle. Thus he remained steady in his resignation and submission to the will of his Father, and to his holy choice of the plan and means for the manifestation of his glory, which were by the humiliations of his Son. As humility is also our only path to heaven, we must look upon and sincerely shun all grandeur as dangerous to us, under whatever colours it may be represented. Leaning towards humiliations as much as possible in all our deliberations, we shall secure ourselves against the illusions of the devil, and the dangers of subtle, refined pride.

5. The devil finding himself baffled in all his stratagems, and not able to draw Christ, whose sanctity had alarmed him, into the least snare, nor even to make him discover, before his time, who he was, threw off the mask and betook himself to open force. Treating him no longer as the Son of God, he assaulted him with the most barefaced and alluring double temptation of covetousness and pride. For he took him upon a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, represented to his imagination, and said to him: "All these will I give thee, if falling down thou wilt adore me." A false promise, and what the devil had not in his power to give. But he is the father of lies, and only seeks to deceive when he tempts. If he can but extort consent, he then treats with scorn the poor deluded sinner, instead of giving him what he flattered him with, and the unhappy wretch finds that he was cheated by empty dreams. Ah! the devil is often adored for one foot of land, or even less. Justice, duty, charity, religion, all are sold for petty temporal interest, or an empty bubble of honour. Were he to put in the scales all the kingdoms of the earth, as he said to Christ, we should regard it as nothing in the balance against virtue. The devil repeats to men this unhappy word, "I will give you;" he displays before their eyes the enchanting object; and of what? of the most paltry pleasure, the basest satisfaction, the most vain applause of sinners, or of worldly pomp, and by this he daily destroys millions of souls. This is the net in which he draws the greater part of mankind. To escape it we must learn from Jesus instantly and courageously to reject the enemy, remembering our allegiance to our God, and saying with abhorrence: "Begone, Satan; for it is written: The Lord thy God thou shalt adore, and him only shalt thou serve."—Mat. iv. 10.

6. The example of Jesus shows, that a resolute, speedy resistance in the very beginning of a temptation, puts the enemy to flight. If we deliberate, dispute with him, and with Eve look upon the gilded bait, by these delays we offend God, and give the tempter such an advantage that we are sure to fall a prey. If we stop to listen to the charms of the syren's voice, we shall certainly be enchanted by it. We have only one means to secure ourselves, which is to shut our ears against it.

We are enlisted soldiers under Christ, but have been slothful and cowardly in his battles. We are to learn from our captain how we must fight. First, in what manner we are to prepare and arm ourselves for this warfare, by exercising ourselves under

his victorious banner, by fasting, retreat, and prayer, studying our adversary's wiles, in meditation, and fortifying ourselves by daily succours from above. Secondly, with what vigour and resolution we must resist the very first appearance of the enemy. If we give him the least leisure to form his attacks, our passions within our own walls take heart, fall into an intelligence with him, and surely betray us into his hands. Christ was exempt from concupiscence. Temptations, to him, could only sound in his ears, and were not able to make any impression, either voluntary or involuntary, on his soul. With us, the case stands quite otherwise. A fund of corruption in our hearts greedily catches the flame from the presence of the object. Jesus would banish the approaches, without reasoning with, or stopping to refute the enemy, to show us how quick and resolute our resistance must always be. Thirdly, we must not lose courage, or be disturbed, if we are assailed with the most humbling, and most foul temptations. The devil would reap the advantage of having disturbed our peace, besides whatever he might thence gain further against us.

Satan, vanquished and confounded, left Christ; and behold, angels came and ministered to him. It sometimes happens, that the violence of our temptations is owing to ourselves. They diminish in proportion as they are overcome, and grace is increased and strengthened in our souls, which, by its resolute, complete victories, daily acquires new spiritual forces. This augmentation of grace, the joy of our triumph and good conscience, the comforts of the Holy Ghost, and the congratulations of the heavenly spirits, are some of the immediate fruits of our happy victory. But we must not think ourselves secure, or cease to watch and arm ourselves daily with fresh fervour, against the return of our implacable enemy, with whom we can never have any truce. Whence, St. Luke says, vi. 13, of Christ: "All his temptations being ended, the devil departed from him, for a time."

"Christ was tempted, that the Christian might not be overcome by the tempter," as St. Augustine says, Serm. 2. in Ps. 90, n. 1. "He would leave us an example of all virtues, and of our whole conversation; therefore, immediately after his baptism, he is taken up to fight against the devil, that, having himself overcome him, he might deliver him to be trampled upon by his disciples," as St. Jerome observes (Ep. 97. ad Demetriad.): "Thus was he truly for us tempted in all things, like as we are, without sin."—Heb. iv. 15.

7. Christ was tempted; and we must also be tempted. This life is a continual temptation. "The life of man is a warfare upon earth."—Job, viii. 1. Almighty God left some enemies among his people in the land of Canaan, for their exercise. "I will not extirpate the nations which Joshua left, that I may try Israel in them," says he, Jud. xi. 22. In like manner, though he can tempt no man, yet he suffers our spiritual enemies to tempt us; but this for our own spiritual advantage, and the greater manifestation of his grace and mercy. For God is magnified and honoured exceedingly by our constant fidelity, and by the triumphs which he works in us, his weak instruments, over his and our own enemies.

Manifold also, and exceedingly great, are the advantages we reap from these, our victories. Heaven is offered to us only, as their prize and recompense. Temptations or conflicts are the necessary condition, and our immortal crowns will be immensely multiplied, in proportion to our victories. "He shall not be crowned, unless he shall have fought lawfully."—2 Tim. ii. 5. No one can share in the triumph of the saints, who has not deserved the title of conqueror of the devil, the world, and the flesh. "He, that shall overcome, shall possess these things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."—Apoc. xxi. 7. "To him, that overcometh, I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of my God."—Apoc. ii. 7. It is only from this that heaven is called a crown, and it is said of the blessed: "These are they, who are come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, they are before the throne of God, and they serve him day and night."—Apoc. vii. 14, 15. How were the apostles, the martyrs, the holy virgins, and all the saints, crowned, but by trials and temptations?

8. God also tries the fidelity of his servants. Thus, he says of Abraham, after he had given the proof of his obedience, by his readiness to sacrifice his son: "Now I have known that thou fearest God."—Gen. xxii. 12. As God, he knew the fidelity of his servant before, but would have a proof given of it. For the same end, he gave the devil leave to try holy Job and Tobias. Tob. ii. 12. By temptation, we likewise learn to know ourselves, and confess our own weakness and dependence on God. In prosperity, we are apt to say: "We shall not be moved for ever."—Ps. xxix. 7. "He, who is not tempted, knows not what he is."—Eccl. xxxiv. 9. For which reason, it was necessary and advan-

tageous to the great St. Paul, amidst his sublime graces, to feel the buffet of the angel of Satan in the sting of his flesh. 2 Cor. xii. 7. Temptation, moreover, preserves from pride, self-sufficiency, rash confidence, and all sin and sloth; satisfies for sin, purifies the soul, enlightens the understanding, inflames the will, inspires fervour, watchfulness, divine love, and other virtues; and increases in a soul all spiritual stores and riches. "Truly, the Lord will make increase with temptation."—1 Cor. x. 13.

It is then permitted for our good; but we must not hence infer, either that God can ever tempt us, or that we can lawfully seek temptations, which would always be a most criminal presumption. We must have patience and courage under them; but are bound to imitate a prudent general, who declines giving battle, unless he be obliged to do so, to gain the just object of the war. We are bound even to pray against, and shun, when possible, all dangerous temptations; and, above all things, to tremble lest we draw them upon ourselves, as a just punishment of our sloth or sins.

Gerson sums up six principal present advantages, which accrue to us from temptations, viz., 1. That we remember, by them, our own frailty. 2. That we be made sensible how necessary the divine succour is to us. 3. That it may appear whether we truly love God. 4. That we may correct other vices, which, before the temptation, we took little notice of. 5. That we may satisfy for our offences. 6. That we may not be puffed up with the gifts of God, or forget ourselves.

9. Though our just and loving God can permit us to be tempted either in punishment of our tepidity and sins, or in mercy for our spiritual advantage, yet it would be the most horrible blasphemy, the most monstrous error, to affirm that God could be the author of any sin; as Florinus, the arch-heretic, refuted by St. Irenæus, seems to have affirmed; or that he can impel any one to sin,* or tempt any one to it. He is infinite sanctity, and the God, hating all iniquity, infinitely perfect, and capable only of what is good, but not of any evil or imperfection, which is sovereignly repugnant to his very essence. Having formed creatures capable of swerving from the holy rule of justice, and endowed with free will, he permits them, through their own

* The expressions and doctrine of the rigid Calvinists, on this point, cannot be justified; not even Chamerus, when he endeavours to mollify them, and exculpate his master. See Calvin's Works, t. 3, p. 71.

malice, to become parents of that monster, moral evil; yet this permission is holy in him, and it serves his infinite wisdom, to draw good even from that evil, which, by its opposition, sets off his goodness, and illustrates, in the most wonderful manner, his justice in punishing sinners, his mercy in redeeming and pardoning them; and displays all his attributes, as shades show the beauties of a painting; and as, without knowing darkness, we should not be sensible of the benefit of light. But if we know not all the reasons for which he suffers evil, it is our duty to adore his infinite wisdom and sanctity, not sacrilegiously and blasphemously to arraign his goodness, because his ways are unsearchable to us, and above our understanding, in this our present state of darkness. We must then confess, that sin is purely our own dire, voluntary offspring, and a monster hateful to God, who cannot anyways draw to it, or concur in it. If it be sometimes ascribed to him, as a punishment of hardened malice, it can proceed no otherwise from him than through his just permission. "Let no man, when he is tempted, say that he is tempted by God. For God is not a tempter of evils, and he tempteth no man."—James, i. 14, 15.

Having created heaven for his creatures' happiness, he was pleased to bestow it as a prize and recompense of their victories, and as a reward of their fidelity. Hence, he placed the angels and our first parents, on their creation, in a state of trial, for a time; and though he has restored us to his grace by a plentiful redemption, he yet leaves us subject to many weaknesses, and exposed to dangerous conflicts; but then he has put such arms into our hands, and strengthens us with such graces, that we have it in our power to be surely triumphant under his protection and succours. Thus he has appointed for our good, that we should obtain heaven as a crown of our fidelity and love of him, and by giving proofs thereof; as if a king, desiring to raise a subject to the greatest honours, should commit to him some important expedition, for which he should take care so well to furnish and equip him, that by public proofs of his conduct and capacity, and by his faithful services, he might show himself worthy of the rank he intended to raise him to. "You are regenerated unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that cannot fade, reserved in heaven for you; who, by the power of God, are kept by faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time, wherein you shall greatly rejoice, if now you must be for a little time made sorrowful in divers temptations; that

the trial of your faith, much more precious than gold which is tried by the fire, may be found unto praise, and glory, and honour." —1 Pet. i. 5, 6, 7.

10. To tempt, sometimes signifies to try another. Thus, God is said to have tempted or tried Abraham. In another sense, man is said to tempt God, if he rashly presume and expect a superfluous miracle from him. But, as it is here meant, temptation is a solicitation or motion to draw a soul to sin. In temptation, we are to distinguish, with St. Gregory, three things: the suggestion, the declaration, and the consent. The suggestion, it is plain, is no sin, if it be noways voluntary. If a governor of a city receive a letter, soliciting him to betray his master, and deliver up his fortress to the enemy, he is guilty of no treason, but performs the part of a true, heroically loyal subject, if he gave no wilful occasion to such a base solicitation, and no sooner perceived the contents, than he abhorred the proposal, and, with indignation, tore, and threw the letter into the fire. But this suggestion becomes criminal, if it be wilfully entertained, or even if it be not rejected immediately, with due horror.

This suggestion may excite an indeliberate and involuntary delight, which is the second degree in the temptation, and is without guilt, if the will, without delay, vigorously and sincerely resists, suppresses, and detests it. To feel it is indeed a great misery, very dangerous to the heart, and a subject of fear, tears, and humiliation to the faithful soul; but it ought by no means to disturb, or discourage her. For, as St. Austin says (l. de Vera Relig., c. 14), sin is so wilful an evil, that it is noways a sin, if it be no way wilful. Under this feeling of pleasure from a criminal object, the will must be most strenuous and earnest, as it is a bewitching charm; but if the will has any way directly or indirectly procured it, or is pleased with it, the guilt of the crime is contracted.

The third degree, then, in temptation, is the consent, and by this the sin is perpetrated. The will may consent to a suggestion or action, either directly, and in itself, or indirectly only, and in the cause in which it is contained, or from which it might probably follow. One, who is accustomed to quarrel or curse, &c., in liquor, if he get drunk, consents to the sin of drunkenness directly; and as he ought to foresee that quarrels, blasphemies, &c., may probably follow from it, knowing himself subject to them on such an occasion, they are voluntarily indirectly, and their guilt imputed to him, though, perhaps, he did not really commit

them, or if he did, it was without any knowledge of what he was doing. Such a one must, in his confession, declare not only that he was drunk; but that he is subject to quarrels, &c. when in that state, and must express what really happened in it. An effect is voluntary in its cause, when it could and ought to have been foreseen as what might probably follow from it, and that cause could and ought, on that account, to have been avoided. Thus, he who throws a stone over a wall, into a public place, or road, where it might hurt or kill somebody, in case of the effect, would be guilty of murder, both before God and men; and, even if no person be actually hit, he commits a sin before God, by applying the cause. This second sort of consent suffices to constitute sin, though, as it is less complete, the malice is no tequally enormous. This makes up a great part of those sins of ignorance in ourselves, or others, which, without great watchfulness over ourselves, we shall seldom take notice of, and which are, however, imputed to us, as owing to our faults. For these, the saints always lived in fear and trembling, and prayed continually with the royal prophet, in the spirit of compunction for them. As for the affected ignorance of those who refuse to learn evil, that they may not be obliged to shun it, saying to God: "We will not the knowledge of thy ways:"—Job. xxi., this, far from extenuating, rather increases and aggravates their malice, as St. Thomas observes.

As for an invincible and inculpable ignorance, whether of the action being unlawful, or of it being committed by us, as under it the sin is not voluntary, it can be no longer a sin. Thus, if a man, by invincible ignorance, should think it lawful, and consequently of precept, to tell a harmless lie to save another's life; or if one should shoot a man, after having taken all due care to examine, and inculpably thinking the object to be a wild beast, he would not sin. But, with regard to the great and essential duties enjoined by the eternal law of God, it is almost impossible to determine in what cases ignorance can be really invincible, so as to excuse from the violation of them. Also inadvertence, or a privation of actual attention, if it be truly invincible, excuses from sin, *e. g.*, if one, after having begun with his utmost endeavours to break a habit of swearing, should, notwithstanding his care and watchfulness, invincibly, without reflection, and as it were mechanically, repeat a rash oath; or if one, who had carefully examined all the fasting days, should as yet inculpably forget one, &c. Not that to sin it is necessary

actually to have some present idea of the malice of the action, it suffices if a person could and ought to have attended to it, had not sloth, indifference, &c., been the criminal hindrance.

There is also what is called an interpretative consent, when the will neither embraces nor rejects the suggestion; and this, not that it may die away more easily, but dwelling upon it, or hovering, as it were, about it. This consent suffices to constitute a mortal sin, were it only on account of the immediate danger of a further consent; thus, it is a degree of infidelity in a spouse to stay listening to a wicked suggestion. The will advances to a higher degree in the crime, if it really doubt whether or no to consent to it.

Any of these degrees of consent may suffice for some degree of a mortal sin, yet may be given in the shortest moment, as nothing is more quick than the motions of the soul, especially when actuated by the wheel of passion. It is, therefore, her principal and most important duty to watch over and guard firmly the fortress of her will. Though the enemy may have seized all her avenues, may have filled her imagination, her mind, and her senses, with his foul images, still she preserves her innocence and can have nothing to fear.

DISCOURSE XLIII.

ON THE MEANS OF OVERCOMING TEMPTATIONS.

1. To prepare ourselves for our spiritual warfare, we must consider the kind of enemies we have to arm against. These are the devil, the world, and our own flesh. As to the first, we learn his implacable hatred and boundless malice against man, from the fury with which he attacked and overcame our first parents in paradise, from which time he is our declared enemy in the service of God. "I will put enmity," says God to him on that occasion, "between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed."—Gen. iii. 15. Hence he reduces his whole time to this one employ of tempting us, and exerts in it all his power. His attention or his time is not divided by different occupations. He studies in all places and at all times to lie in ambuscade, or to make open assaults upon us, to make us his prey. He follows us, he observes us, he besieges us

everywhere. To judge of his strength, we must remember what he has done with the utmost ease, and, as it were, in play, when God did not restrain his power; and that he would do much more if not withheld by that omnipotent arm. He hurled the swine into the lake, and filled the whole province with fear: he has slain armies in one night; killed the seven first husbands of Sarah; often disturbs nature, and has power to stir up storms and tempests, which ravage the world; and what did he not effect in holy Job?

We shall still more dread his craft, if we consider the almost infinite subtility of his spiritual nature, and his long experience, now of some thousands of years, in destroying souls. He knows what baits are most attractive in every vice, and what passions every man is most prone to; he discovers the secret bent of each heart, studies its weakest side, and seeks the place and time when it is most unguarded and open. Thus always, "as a roaring lion he goeth about seeking whom he may devour."—1 Pet. iv. 8. Better to succeed, he puts on all shapes; sometimes employing hidden snares, sometimes open violence. He often plays the serpent, lying concealed to sting without being discovered; he frequently even transforms himself into an angel of light, assuming the air of virtue, and again appearing in his own figure, making his attacks openly, and with the utmost fury and rage; whence he is sometimes styled the old serpent, sometimes the lion, and the noon-day devil, &c., but from his indefatigable industry, and, as it were, office of tempting men, he is called Satan, or the enemy, and "the tempter," and "he who tempts."—Matt. vi. 31; Thess. iii. 5. In an army, an old crafty commander is more to be feared than many legions. To the malice, power, falsehood, and cunning of this our spiritual enemy, and to the wiles and deceits to which the father of lies has ever recourse, we must add his insolence and pride, which dares everything, and is swoln with daily unhappy victories over millions of souls. He, in his fall, drew the third part of the angels after him. He conquered Adam, although sheltered in paradise; Judas an apostle, and even then in the holy company of our blessed Saviour; Solomon, exalted above all other men in wisdom and the gifts of fortune, and also endowed with the extraordinary favours of grace; and many who had grown old in the practice of penance, and had often foiled him before, but who had the misfortune at last to lay aside their arms, by which they fell his prey. And he daily overturns

cedars of sanctity in the Church, besides dragging after him the unhappy bulk of mankind, an easy and almost willing prey to him. Elate with success, he goes forth as a conqueror to make conquests (Apoc. vi. 2), with such pride as to confide that Jordan itself may "go into his mouth," as he is described under the type of the monster Behemoth (Job, xl. 18); *i. e.*, according to St. Gregory, that he may swallow up the whole race of Adam. Such, indeed, is his empire in the world, that he is called the prince thereof, and the ruler of these darknesses. This is the formidable enemy, against whom we are to maintain our ground. "For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places."—Eph. vi. 12. The devils are said to be in the high places, because they fill this lower air with their multitudes, though probably carrying their hell about with them, as well as those who are already confined in their inferior dungeons, as Lucifer himself is represented now to be. Apoc. xx. 2. Those, who still are permitted to hover here, are described in the sacred books as constituting a great army, under a prince and leader, and seducing souls by myriads. "That old serpent who is called the devil, and Satan who seduceth the whole world."—Apoc. xii. 9. And if we could be at peace with all other enemies, we can have no truce with this one.*

2. Our baptismal renunciations, and the repeated severe admonitions of our divine Master, teach us, that the world is a second enemy, against whose furious assaults we are to maintain ourselves. It tempts us, by offering on every side its alluring objects of vanity and sensuality to ensnare our hearts. Everything in it is gilded over with some false gloss to excite in our hearts some inordinate passion, unless we are careful continually to bridle and restrain our affections, our desires, and our fears. "The creatures of God are converted to his hatred against him, and to temptation to the souls of men, and into a trap for the feet of the fools."—Wisdom, xiv. 11. "Which way soever we go forth, there are many snares," says St. Ambrose, l. 4. in Luc. n. 10. "We must fear, even in undertakings for virtue, a snare in embracing a state of chastity and perfection."

If inanimate objects in the world are full of snares to virtue,

* Ecce fiant omnes Christiani, numquid et diabolus Christianus erit?—St. Aug. in Ps. lxix. n. 2.

mankind presents greater, and far more dangerous and frequent. The contagion of their discourses, gestures, and example sets such strong and imperceptible ones, that an extraordinary caution, watchfulness, and light are necessary to discern them, and a superior courage to shun or break them. Add, frequently violence and open persecution; an human respect and awe, or a fear of the censures or frowns of others; and, above all, the enchanting and almost irresistible power of secret seductions, which conceal their danger, and draw us into the gulf by steps, which appear at first innocent, nay virtuous or necessary. The great Solomon conversed with, then loved, next married strange women; and, in a short time, out of complaisance, was seduced by them into idolatry.

3. But the most pernicious and troublesome snare of temptations is that concupiscence, which we carry within our own bosom; which, through the channels of our senses, holds a constant intelligence with our exterior enemies. We have in us a fund of sloth, that exposes us to all spiritual dangers and sin. We have a weakness both in the irascible power of our souls, and in the concupiscible; by which, in the former, fervour, zeal, or eagerness degenerate from objects of virtue, or from an honest self-defence, or from the just manner of pursuing them, and give us a natural bent to pride, anger, envy, &c.; and in the latter, our desires of good are inclined to fix upon the false apparent pleasures of sin, or to seek too eagerly, and in an inordinate manner, the gratification of appetites, which, otherwise, are in themselves regular and lawful. If we reduce these sources of weakness to one fund of vicious passions or inclinations, and call it concupiscence, we may define it a tendency to an inordinate love of ourselves. But concupiscence most properly signifies the latter of these weaknesses, or an inordinate appetite of sensual pleasure.

The appetites, conformable to the objects of our senses, are in themselves good and laudable, a perfection of our nature, an instinct necessary to make man seek many things necessary to preserve his being. They were bestowed on Adam in his happy state of original integrity in paradise, when the will was of itself disposed readily to obey the commands of reason, and to be perfectly subject to the holy law of God. But by his sin they became rebellious, and formed obstacles to the prosecution of virtue; and human nature conceived an inclination to an inordinate desire of its own excellence, and to refer all things and all its pursuits to itself; while the sensitive part was so far from obeying reason

without reluctance, that it strove to shake off its yoke, and often excites motions in the mind or in the body, which the will has no share in, nay disowns, contradicts, condemns, and is ashamed of; and it moreover inclines, as it were, or weighs down the will, to engage it to consent to its irregular cupidities. Thus man, the great and noble living image of God, feels in himself those base and furious motions of concupiscence, the like to which even no brute ever suffers; a mystery, that seemed to St. Augustine sufficient alone to prove original sin to have been its source. Christ, to whom we owe our immortal thanks for so inestimable a benefit, has rescued us from its power; but he still leaves it for the subject of our trials and victories, mercifully furnishing us with means and graces to subdue it. Its first involuntary and perfectly indeliberate motions are noways sinful, as the will has no part in them; these are called by the Greeks propassions, not passions; by the Latin schoolmen, first motions.

4. This concupiscence is our third and most dangerous spiritual enemy. The others are exterior tempters, and they make their most violent assaults, chiefly by exciting this to rebel within ourselves. Unless it be stirred up against us, the most furious attempts of the devil and the world are only weak efforts acting outwardly on our senses or souls; hence they usually only lay baits to concupiscence. This then is the great instrument of the devil in seducing us. "Every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured. Then, when concupiscence hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin."—James, i. 14, 15. And this is the tempter, which we have most reason to fear, because it is most furious, and at the same time a domestic and a treacherous enemy. Our flesh is, on one side, a friend, an inseparable companion, partner, and an assistant in virtue, which we are bound to feed and cherish. If we destroy it, we become self-murderers, and, if we do not subdue it by mortification, we are sure to become its prey. Alas! what shall I do, my God? How shall I overcome this body, at the same time both a friend and an enemy? How shall I tame that, which I received from nature to love? How shall I deliver myself from that, to which I am inseparably linked? How shall I appease that with reason, which listens to none, and which seeks to seduce me by a thousand deceitful lies? How shall I make my peace or truce with that, which never ceases to allure and lay snares for me, and against which I have sworn an irreconcileable war? How much soever I shall afflict it, I shall always find it resisting me. This St.

Jerome experienced in his mortified body. This St. Paul, even amidst all his fatigues and labours, complained of. "I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin that is in my members. Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death."—Rom. vii. 23, 24.

5. These three implacable enemies never cease assaulting us, either by open attacks or secret stratagems. If we enjoy a seeming calm, we must not grow remiss, but be sure that an ambuscade is laid for us. Whence St. Augustine says (Hom. 40, ex 50): "Let the soldier of Christ be always armed, always solicitous and watching, more fearful even in peace than in war." Having continually three such restless, such furious, such crafty, and such strong enemies to encounter and guard against, can we indulge in sloth, and forget the war, in which we are engaged, and the dangers with which we are surrounded? Every moment of our lives we are exposed to receive a mortal wound; the twinkling of an eye suffices; it may be admitted through any one of our senses left unguarded. Yet upon the issue of this war depends an eternity of infinite misery or happiness. How must we tremble at this thought! If we miscarry, we are lost for ever.

6. In these straits what must we do? We must be penetrated with a deep humility, and an entire distrust in ourselves, place a firm confidence in God, have recourse to him by fervent prayer, and, with great solicitude, watch against all dangers. The first disposition for this spiritual war is an humble diffidence in our own strength. Humility is necessary throughout the whole spiritual life; but nowhere more essentially than to make us victorious over our spiritual enemies. We are unable to withstand them ourselves, being weakness itself; all our support must be from God; and he who is the sovereign lover of truth, and the hater of all pride and self-sufficiency, will have us acknowledge this. He will never protect those, who are strong in their own conceit. In this sense, the beginning of all sin is pride. Even in the state of innocence, Adam, free from concupiscence and all that weakness of the will with regard to good, which we inherit from his sin, fell; because, confiding in his own strength, he neglected to call upon God. St. Peter fell by presuming on his resolutions, though seemingly the strongest possible. And this same presumption is the source of all sin. Can anything be more just than that the weak puff not themselves up with a false, insolent arrogance, and do not dare what is so much above their abili-

ties, and highly injurious to the grace and essential right of God? "There is no help to me in myself."—Job, vi. 13.

7. Though we are weak, and of ourselves totally unequal to our spiritual warfare, it would be equally fatal and criminal to despond and lose courage, as to presume. No one can ever fight with bravery, whose spirits are sunk. The soldier must necessarily be a coward, who is not animated with cheerfulness and confidence. It is this, that gives vigour and earnestness to the soul. And what motives of confidence have we not in our spiritual combats, if we but look up towards God. He, who is almighty, has bound himself to fight in us and with us, if we but call upon him; he will cover us with his shield in the day of battle. Let the rage of our enemies be ever so terrible, God says to us as he did to St. Paul: "My grace is sufficient for thee."—2 Cor. xiii. 9. Eliseus's servant was terrified, seeing himself and his master surrounded by the army of the Syrians; the prophet said to him: "Fear not, for more are with us than with them; and the Lord opened the eyes of the servant, and he saw; and behold the mountain filled with horses and fiery chariots."—4 Kings, vi. 16, 17. God's angels are encamped around us, and he himself is with us, armed to conquer for us. What then can we fear, if we secure his affection to ourselves? "Place me by thee, and let the hand of whomsover fight against me."—Job, xvii. 3. As for our enemies, they cannot approach us but by God's permission; and he restrains their power. "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able."—1 Cor. x. 13. The devil is like a dog in a chain, says St. Austin, Ol. Serm. 197. de Temp. nunc app. Serm. 37. He can bite no one, who does not presumptuously put himself within his reach. Now see how foolish that man is, who suffers himself to be bit by a dog tied up by a chain. Do not approach near him by the pleasures of the world and the senses, and he will not be able to come at thee. He can bark, he can entice, but he cannot bite, except him that is willing to suffer him to do so. St. Anthony, in a discourse to his disciples, shows how weak and contemptible an enemy Satan is, as we are armed by Christ against him; for he was not able to hinder or stop his preaching against him, and trembled at prayer, watching, fasting, meekness, humility, and charity. What a subject of joy and confidence, to be assured of victory, if we are not wanting to God's protection? This humble diffidence in ourselves and confidence in God highly honour him, and engage him in our favour; for they give all to him, as is our obligation, and are the testimony of a

great love of him, and the strongest acknowledgment of his goodness as well as sovereignty. Hence, he says, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt honour me.

8. In these dispositions we must address ourselves to him by fervent prayer. By it Judith returned chaste and triumphant from the camp of Holofernes: Daniel was preserved in the ravening lion's den, and the children in the furnace: and it is by it that all the saints overcame the devil. Amaleck was his type, when he opposed the Jews in their passage out of Egypt into the land of promise, the type of heaven. "Whilst Josue fought, Moses went to the mountain to pray, and whilst he lifted up his hands, Israel overcame; but if he in the least let them fall, Amaleck began to recover himself."—Exod. xvii. 12. Our divine Redeemer was pleased to prepare himself for temptation by fasting and prayer, only to teach us that this must be our armour; and all the saints made it such, crying out with the royal prophet of God without ceasing: "Save me from all who persecute me, and deliver me; lest as a lion he carry away my soul, and there be no one to rescue it."—Ps. vii. 2. "Enlighten my eyes, that I may never sleep in death: may my enemy never say, I have prevailed against him."—Ps. xii. 3, 4. "In thee I shall be delivered from temptation, and in my God I shall pass over the wall."—Ps. xvii. 30. "It is he who teaches my hands to battle."—Ib. v. 35. "Unless the Lord shall keep the city, he watches in vain who keeps it."—Ps. cxxvi. 1.

Our remote preparation against temptation must be, to pray always most earnestly to be delivered from its dangers. A person, armed and fenced by prayer, is terrible to the devil. "Believe me," says St. Anthony to his disciples, as St. Athanasius tells us in his life, "the devil fears extremely watchings, prayer, fasting, mildness, voluntary poverty, the contempt of vainglory, humility, mercy, and above all a pure and burning love of Christ." And St. John Climacus says, Scal. p. 661: "As thieves do not easily rob in places that are fortified and guarded, so the devil, the spiritual robber of our souls, can never plunder those, who have always prayer, their spiritual arms, as it were in their hands."

Prayer must be accompanied with the practice of all other good works and virtues, which will draw down the grace of God, and make our armour complete. "Put on the armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil."—Eph. vi. 10. "Take unto you the armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things per-

fect."—v. 13. He then describes this complete armour, consisting of the meditation of the Divine Word, and a steady, strong resolution of adhering to his truth by an inviolable fidelity; proof even against torments, death, and hell, "in all things taking the shield of truth, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the wicked one. By all prayer and supplication, praying, at all times, in the spirit; and in the same watching with all instance."—Ib. v. 17, 18. This, then, is the armour with which we must be always girt, ready to repel our enemies; though it is not our use of it that can defend us. By it, however, "we shall be strengthened in the Lord, and in the might of his power."—Ib. v. 10.

9. We must watch as well as pray, or we should be guilty of tempting God, and would be justly abandoned by God to perish in our presumption. This our blessed Redeemer presses upon us by so often inculcating that important advice to watch always. "Watch ye and pray, that you enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."—Mark, xiv. 38. How strong soever our resolution and spirit may seem against sin, we are too weak to enter the lists with our enemy, unless God be with us. But this he never will be, if we rashly presume on ourselves, and challenge our enemies, when he does not call and lead us out to battle. We must, then, watch over ourselves, to prevent our enemies gaining any advantage against us. If we had but one enemy who made it his study to take away our life by violence, craft, or poison, should not we be always upon our guard to secure ourselves against him, both night and day, at home and abroad? Should we ever go out without considering and arming ourselves against all chances? The devils are always watching to surprise us; and if they spy one sense, one action, one moment unguarded, they are sure to seize on it. Our vigilance, then, must be perpetual and also universal. In vain does a governor guard the gates of his fortress, if he leave a breach or pass open in any other part. When men watch only on one side, the devil is sure to attack them on another, where he sees them less attentive and less upon their guard. He who watches only his words or actions, will be tempted and easily seduced by dangerous glances, or by other little things, which will kindle sparks in his heart, the more dangerous as their beginning will be less observed. Nothing, then, must escape our vigilance; no sense, no action, no word or thought, no moment, no passion. All avenues must be guarded against pride, no less than against impurity or gluttony; that, whatsoever shape our enemy turns

himself into, on which side soever he directs his attacks, he may everywhere find us in a condition to resist him. Above all, we must watch against our predominant passion, as it is by it the devil chiefly studies to assault us, and lays his most frequent and most dangerous stratagems, as their concupiscence is strongest and we weakest and blindest; consequently the more easily betrayed into a snare, or deceived by crafty wiles. Scarcely an hour passes in which some object does not strike one or other of our senses, or intrude itself into our mind, which, if consented to, or if not instantly and vigorously repulsed, would give a mortal stab to our souls. What a necessity do we lie under of always being upon the watch over all our faculties, immediately to take the alarm in the time of danger? Even under the appearance of good we must fear a snare.*

But, how far are men of the world from this universal watchfulness? They seem to live as if they had no enemies to fear, or as if they were no less secure of their salvation than the angels, and as free from passions and dangers. Or, if they watch against one vice, which perhaps is not their favourite object, they lay themselves open exposed to others equally or much more dangerous to them. They, who hate prodigality, do not sufficiently fear avarice. If some mortify their flesh, do they study also to die to their own wills? Or, are these sufficiently guarded against pride, or the contrary? Do not many rest quietly in the bosom of pleasures, and in a life of sensuality? They seem totally employed in making one diversion succeed another, when the first grows stale or tiresome. Do not others apply all their attention to temporal affairs and earthly goods? Such persons, so far from watching over their inclinations and senses, court temptations and seek dangers, and are so blind as not to see them or many of their own falls. Temptation becomes a habit, and is not so much as perceived by them. Worldly conversation is not feared, but sought and entered into without the least precaution. Excess of sleep, sensuality in meals, perpetual diversions, softness, and idleness are looked upon as privileges of an easy condition and fortune in the world, and not as snares to the soul. The poor think, that desires and murmurings are allowed in their circumstances. All descriptions of people act, in general, so as to strengthen concupiscence, instead of labouring to subdue that inexhausted source of temptations in their souls.

The continual practice of penance and mortification is another

* Bonus nunquam, nisi boni simulatione, deceptus est —St. Bern. Serm. 66. in Cant.

necessary part of armour against temptations. Interior penance, by repeated acts of compunction, must nourish perpetually a sovereign horror and dread of sin and all its occasions. We must continually beg of God a constant filial fear of sin, that we may be always on our guard against it, praying with St. Francis Xavier: "Permit me not, O Lord! to be separated from you; for this would be more dreadful to me than all the torments of hell."

Penance must also, by both interior and exterior mortification, contribute, without ceasing, to subdue the passions and the flesh; concupiscence may be weakened and kept under command; but it cannot be extinguished as long as we live in this mortal body; this source of temptation cannot be totally drained; this *fomes peccati*, this weakness begotten from sin, and inclining to sin, cannot be perfectly rooted out, as long as we groan under the load of the flesh; but it can be always diminished and kept in subjection; we, therefore, lie under a necessity of continually crucifying it. "Quotidie minus potest, finiri non potest," says holy Bede, in Rom. viii. We must daily, by some self-denials, or by other means, restrain all our inward appetites, such as by contradicting our own will to follow that of another, or receiving joyfully those things which contradict it, &c. We must likewise every day take something from our body, refuse something to our flesh and senses, that would flatter them, viz.: to keep them low, and prevent their irregular motions and cravings, or, at least, teach them to obey. This is the means established by God, by which alone his victorious graces are offered to us; this is the armour, with which we are to cover and strengthen ourselves, and by which alone we can be able to repel our adversaries. Christ, himself, taught us this by preparing himself for temptation by fasting. By it all the saints were holy martyrs of themselves, and innocent murderers of concupiscence; an Anthony vanquished it by solitude, labours, and rigorous austerities; a Benedict extinguished its heat in streams of his blood, throwing himself upon thick thorns; a Francis, feeling it preparing to revolt, quelled it by rolling in the snow and ice. Many did so by standing in frozen waters; St. Ammonius tore his flesh with hot iron hooks. Shall Christians hope to overcome its assaults, who, by studied self-love, by sleep, delicacies, and delights of their senses, bid their flesh fortify itself and take strength, to tempt and persecute them. Can they complain that concupiscence burns in them, whilst they themselves set it on fire? Can they

sigh to God to be delivered in a storm, which they themselves have excited? Can they be surprised to find themselves devoured by a worldly spirit, who seek in worldly company those objects, which solicit to sin, and that conversation, which gives impressions of pride, vanity, and ambition? Such persons must mortify these passions by solitude, fasts, and watching. But these are remedies which a worldly spirit cannot bear. It then must perish.

The being always employed in an earnest and serious manner is the most indispensable part of this penance. Sloth and idleness are the mother and source of all vices. Nothing can give the devil a more assured victory, which way soever he shall direct his batteries. We must be diligent in all duties and exercises, both temporal, or of our calling, and spiritual, or of religion. We must have frequent recourse to our spiritual director, for his advice, as St. John Climacus observes, Gr. 4. We must seek to wound the enemy with his own weapon, *i. e.*, to advance in the opposite virtue; *e. g.*, in temptations of pride, to apply ourselves particularly to acts of humility. By these, we remove ourselves from our enemy, and fight him with great advantage, at a distance.

10. Under temptation, the grand precept is to resist, with vigour, the very first assault. To delay one moment, and much more, by any softness in the will, to suffer the dangerous impression to grow stronger, on one side, weakens the heart extremely, and on the other, fortifies the enemy, who, from such an advantage, becomes irresistible. "From one spark, a fire is increased." Eccl. xi. 30. If the serpent gets but his head in, he easily draws his whole body after it. As the fly, hovering about the candle, at last singes his wings, and being drawn into the flame by the attraction of its atmosphere, perishes therein; so a soul, which startles not at the danger, is sure to fall into it. He, who plays with the bait, will be delighted and enchanted by it, and will certainly devour it in the end. Not to resist immediately, is already to yield in some degree; it is often what divines call an interpretative consent.

Upon the very first appearance of the enemy, we must most vigorously repel him, raising our hearts to God, as our only support and protection, with as great earnestness as a man, who should suddenly find himself on the brink of perishing: "Lord, save me, I perish. Divine Redeemer, most merciful Jesus, by thy adorable wounds, by thy precious blood and sacred death, preserve

me from this devouring lion. Deliver me, and place me by thyself. I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains, whence succour will come to me."

The soul must, according to the circumstances, persevere in fervent prayer, or often, after an earnest short prayer, apply herself, with the utmost seriousness, to some employment of duty, charity, or labour, which will engross her whole attention, taking extreme care not in the least to favour the temptation, by any thought, glance, motion of the hand, &c., but to keep our minds most oppositely busied, and our hands, eyes, and whole body, in the most remote posture and place, that we conveniently can. Concupiscence is crafty and ingenious, seeking to gain at least some little secret advantage; but our watchfulness and resistance must be entire.

11. But our manner of resistance must be diversified. In some temptations, we must resist, by encountering them manfully, as in those of sloth, or of a disrelish of prayer, and other exercises of piety. Here we must boldly look them in the face, and they will appear more easy to be conquered. We must redouble those exercises; sometimes proposing them to ourselves, at first, only for a certain time. The devil will at last betake himself to flight, when he finds so vigorous and early a resistance. Of these temptations, and those of pride, and the like, we are most properly to understand that precept: "Resist the devil, and he will fly from you."—James, iv. 7. But let the assault of the enemy be ever so furious or obstinate, we must not suffer our resistance to grow remiss or slack, saying to ourselves: "You have not yet resisted to blood, fighting against sin."—Heb. xii. 4.

On the contrary, in temptations of impurity, sensuality, or concupiscence, we must indeed instantly and strenuously reject the suggestion, and defend the fortress of our will, and all our powers, against the most furious attacks; but this must be done, not by meeting the enemy, but by flying from him. Here, we must fly and fight; we must quit instantly the presence of the object, the company, place, or whatever else may favour the temptation. Concupiscence within us is more easily set on a flame than touch-wood by the contact of fire: hence, the apostle's precept, "Fly fornication."—1 Cor. xii. 18. Whosoever fixes his eyes upon an object, with Eve on the beautiful apple, will certainly, with her, find his heart entangled by it.

12. God sometimes permits souls to be molested by vehement

temptations of importunate thoughts, as against faith, of blasphemy, or the like. Under such trials, which serve to purify our souls, and furnish us occasions of great merit and victories, we must reject the enemy calmly and peaceably, by despising him; for too violent resistance in this case disturbs the mind, makes the devil's impressions stronger, and engraves them deeper. Scratching a sore envenoms it the more. The devil is here properly the prince of flies; when they are troublesome, the best method of driving them away is not to mind them; if a person endeavours to chase them with too much vehemence, they return the more. "If such temptations continue importunate," says St. Francis of Sales, "be not disturbed: the noise of leaves in trees is not the clashing of arms. Lately, I was near a hive of bees, and some of them stopped on my face; I was putting my hand to drive them away, but a countryman standing by said to me, Fear not, do not touch them, and they will not hurt you. I did so; and not one of them bit or stung me. Believe me, touch not these, and they will not hurt you. God permits the cunning serpent to offer us his ware for sale, that, by despising it, we may have an opportunity of showing our fidelity to God."

St. Peter of Alcantara, in his treatise of the Peace of the Soul, c. 10, 11, says: "Interior temptations in the timorous are marks of God's favour, not of his displeasure. When do we hear that notorious sinners are so molested? The more filthy and horrible a temptation is to a devout soul, the more it humbles her, so much the more does it advance the designs of God in her. We are all naturally proud, lovers of ourselves, and ever presuming on ourselves above what we are. This self-esteem and confidence are so prejudical to our spiritual progress, that the very scent or contagious stench thereof, at whatsoever distance, is enough to blast all hopes of perfection in us. God therefore, in his mercy, would bring us, as it were, by force to the necessary knowledge of ourselves. For this he permitted St. Peter to fall, and St. Paul to suffer a vexatious temptation under his sublime revelations. In like manner, pitying our miseries and perverse inclinations, he permits many abominable temptations to befal us, that we may become humble and sensible of our own wretchedness. By seeing this, we find what we are a source of, what can proceed from us, and what we really are, the very scum of the earth. This is also an amiable purgatory. It is the fruitful seed of virtues, graces, and heavenly crowns. What a glorious sight is such a soul in the eyes of God? What spiritual riches does she not acquire?"

13. The same saint adds, ib. c. 13, that, "if we fall into imperfections, we must not fret, but humble ourselves, and be peaceably penitents. On such occasions, casting a loving glance on God we ought to say with our hearts and mouths: Lord, I have done like what I am, nor could anything else be expected from my base heart. It is your mercy that I did not plunge myself headlong into all wickedness; praised for ever be your goodness. Pardon my ingratitude, which I most heartily grieve for. Then go on with fresh watchfulness and courage." It is a mark of pride to be fretful and impatient under a fall, because a soul finds herself weaker and more wretched than she presumed herself to have been. This fretfulness is often the more pernicious temptation of the two. It also hinders a speedy perfect repentance, and is as if a man, who had fallen into the mire, should lie fretting and plunging himself deeper into it. Dorotheus says (Doctr. 13): "When a man bears with humility and patience a temptation coming upon him, he passes over it without receiving any trouble or hurt from it."

14. Sometimes it is on account of some secret love of the temptation, or affection to the sin, or of some neglect or fault, that God permits a soul to be molested with temptations. Such persons join to a desire of being delivered from their danger a secret complacency in it, and a fear of being rid of it. Their first duty is to discover and root out entirely this lurking criminal affection, that they may resist and shun sin with their whole hearts; for God is not to be mocked. We read in Rufin's History of Solitaries, B. 2, that a young hermit begged the prayers of an ancient holy man to be freed from a violent temptation, and was told that he nourished that temptation by his own negligence and secret inclination to it. St. Austin, as to his former vicious habits, gives a like account of himself, and in the fervour of his zeal cries out in the words of Holy Writ: "How much the more they oppressed them, so much the more were they multiplied and increased."—Exod. i. 12.

St. Chrysostom having inculcated the necessity we are under of always watching against our spiritual enemies, and standing always armed, adds (Hom. 4. in Gen., t. 4, p. 23): "If we always carry these arms upon us, no arrows of the enemy will ever be able to reach us, but will fall back upon them without any effect. For the grace of God makes us harder and stronger than adamant, and, if we will, absolutely invincible. Therefore, as he who beats adamant does not injure it, but wearies himself, and spends his

strength in vain; and as he, who kicks against the goad, wounds his feet; so our affairs stand with the enemy of our salvation, if we keep ourselves always covered with the arms, which the grace of the Holy Ghost furnishes us. For so great is their strength, that our adversary is not able to bear the rays which dart from them, and his eyes are blinded by them. We are obliged always to bear them, when we go into the streets or market, when to the church, and when we return home, with our friends or in our employs, waking and sleeping, in every moment; we are never to lay them out of our hands. We must, moreover, take care always to keep them bright, clean and fit to repulse and overcome our enemy." "He finds no opportunity," says the same father (Hom. 5, ib. p. 32), "to assault us with advantage, unless he spies us slothful and unguarded. Therefore we must be always watching and always busy, to be always victorious."

"We must not lose courage in this continual warfare. God would have thee sustain a little labour, that his victory for thee may be thine; as a king will have his son to stand in the battle, throw darts, and appear in the ranks, that the victory may be ascribed to him, though it is he himself who does all with his army and gains the day; so God does by us in his and our war against the devil."—Hom. 16. in Matt. p. 221, t. 7. Saint Anthony, in the 35th year of his age, felt the most furious assaults from the demon of impurity, who exercised his rage in a visible, frightful manner. When the temptation was over, and the saint left by the fiend half dead in his ruined cell, as Saint Athanasius relates, Jesus visited him, filling his cell with the light and his soul with the sweetness of his presence. Anthony, sighing, said to him: "Where wert thou, good Jesus? Where wert thou from the beginning of my conflict? Why wert thou not with me?" But he heard a voice answering him: "Anthony, I was here, and I beheld thy battle and victory; and, because thou didst not yield, I strengthened thee." St. Augustine says, "God himself delights in the spectacle of a Christian under temptation, and says to him: I behold you from heaven; fight; conquer; I will crown you."—In Ps. 39.

DISCOURSE XLIV.

WATCHFULNESS AGAINST TEMPTATIONS.

Therefore take the armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day; and in all things to stand perfect.—Ephes. vi. 13.

The Apostle here closes his Epistle to the Ephesians by a most endearing exhortation, which contains an instruction the most important relative to the whole duty of a Christian; for, as we on earth are soldiers always in war, always surrounded with implacable enemies; "the life of man is a warfare upon earth;" so it especially behoves us to be perpetually on our guard, to stand always in our armour, according to St. Paul's expression, that we may be able to resist in the day of danger, and in every action, on all occurrences, be firm to our allegiance against all the enterprises of the devil. It was this same advice, which our blessed Saviour everywhere so earnestly inculcates by pressing exhortations, by repeated precepts and parables, and by his example. "If the householder did know what hour the thief would come, he would watch verily, and would not suffer his house to be broken."—Luke, xii. 39. "Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation."—Mat. xxvi. 41. Hence he threatens the Bishop of Sardis: "If therefore thou watch not, I will come to thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come to thee."—Apoc. iii. 3. In a word, no just man ever persevered but by this means. "Blessed is he who watcheth."—Apoc. xvi. 15. No just man ever fell but for want of this watchfulness. "Therefore he that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall."—1 Cor. x. 12. And again, "Awake, ye just, and sin not."—1 Cor. xv. 34. Unless we persevere it signifies little for us now to heap up treasures of merits. "He shall not be crowned unless he strive lawfully." My design, therefore, is not to enlarge upon the manner in which we must behave ourselves in temptation; but to examine in what this Christian vigilance consists, which is of far greater moment, and what are these arms we must put on; that is, how we must watch every motion of our enemy to prevent being surprised by a stratagem or at a disadvantage, such as the devil never fails to seek for; and how we must always be prepared and ready to repel the attacks of our subtle enemy. Ave Maria.

This Christian watchfulness requires five conditions:—1. That we carefully maintain and daily renew in our souls a great horror of sin as the greatest of all evils. 2. That we have a great diffidence in our own weakness, and be truly penetrated with a great fear of falling. 3. That we avoid all occasions of sin, and as much as possible all venial sin. 4. That by fervent prayer we daily beg of God to preserve us from so great an evil. 5. That by mortification we bring our passions into due subjection. It is by these five points we may see, whether we are likely to stand our ground and persevere to the end. As to the first, it is evidently impossible we should ever fall into sin, did we seriously consider what it is; hence the axiom, "every one that sins is ignorant." As we are always in the presence of God; as it is in him we live, move, and exist; as his adorable eyes are ever fixed on us, so ought we perpetually to walk before him, to have him present in every thought and action. He sees you in the fields, says St. Augustine (Serm. 152), and in your actions; in light and darkness; by day and night; he penetrates the secrets of your heart, and every circumstance of your actions. Dares, then, a silly worm to offend him in his very presence, before whom the pillars of heaven tremble? Yes; though he would not for the world affront an earthly king, he boldly insults that great legislator, whose laws all creatures obey; whose orders heaven and earth punctually comply with. The sinner alone dares to contradict his omnipotent will, dares to infringe and break the order and symmetry of the universe, and to set himself up an enemy against God, and to defy his laws. He rashly offends his all-seeing judge, who is just ready to throw him into hell-flames, did not mercy and compassion make him defer the execution of his justice. He most ungratefully contemns the best of benefactors, tramples on the precious blood of his God and Redeemer, slights the benefits of his creation, conservation, and a thousand other favours, and despises the inestimable love of God towards him, out of which he had from all eternity prepared and decreed to heap on him eternal happiness with showers of other incomprehensible blessings. He shakes off the yoke of God, and says, I will not serve him, to enlist himself under the devil's banner, preferring his slavery to the service of God. Who has ever heard of such dreadful things? He sacrilegiously tears off from Christ those members he had united to that divine head, and prostitutes them to Satan. He defiles, without concern, the living image of

the eternal God, and impiously pollutes his sacred temple. "Do you not consider whose image you have violated?—to whom you have done the contumely?"—St. Anselm. He expels from his breast the Holy Ghost, with all his heavenly graces. He forgets and violates his baptismal allegiance, and so often repeated solemn engagements, breaking through all the ties of nature and grace to make himself an enemy to God, and set up a standard of rebellion against his Creator. As the priest at baptism, expelling the devil, said: "Depart from him, unclean spirit, and give place to the Holy Spirit;"* now he villanously cries out: "Depart from me, Holy Spirit, and give place to the unclean spirit:" a blasphemy so outrageous, that it is impossible to think on it without the utmost horror. But it is not my design to dilate on the malice of sin, or the blindness and ingratitude of a sinner, which, if we but well remember, it is impossible we should ever fall into so great a misfortune. It was with good reason St. Anselm said (Simil., c. 191, p. 188): "If I saw sin on one side, and hell open on the other, and must fall into either, I had rather jump into hell pure, than defiled even enter heaven, were it possible." And St. Francis of Sales says: "It far surpasses all astonishment, that a rational creature should embrace so hideous an evil." But sinners say they will but for once gratify their passion, and immediately rise again; for all Christians must sin either in these dispositions, or in downright despair. And how can folly and insensible blindness ever reach to so high a pitch? They insult God, contristate the Holy Ghost, lose all the merits of their past life, make the heavens as well as the Church militant weep for them, produce in nature a monster, to extinguish which Christ died, and breed an evil of infinite malice, for which all creatures, by millions of ages spent in severe penances, could never contribute the smallest portion of satisfaction; and all this with a firm design of repenting the moment after, and heartily wishing they had never committed it, so that they would give the universe to have it undone, if possible, resolving beforehand to do severe penance for it as long as they live. Be astonished, O heavens! at this. But, foolish creature, be not deceived; God is not to be mocked. True repentance is an effect of grace, a miracle more surpassing the course of nature than for a dead man to rise again. And do you imagine that God ordinarily grants so easily such

* Exi ab eo, spiritus immunde, et da locum Spiritui Sancto.

extraordinary graces, or works such miracles in favour of presuming sinners? He is merciful, but just at the same time, to punish such daring presumption and abuse of his goodness. And one sin by its weight draws to another, according to that axiom taken from St. Gregory, and often repeated by St. Thomas. Nay, though it be immediately blotted out by speedy repentance, the wound leaves a deep impression on the soul; and the devil, armed with this corruption of nature, obtains even after repentance a great command over this poor soul, which is seldom able to bear the violence necessary to break these chains. So, at best, it is far more easy to avoid the first sin, than it will be afterwards; and the repentance is generally very uncertain and slippery. The will still remains divided between God and her passion; has indeed a velleity to serve God; but this serves only to delude the soul, and persuade her she is truly penitent, whilst in reality she retains a fond complaisance for the sin, and cannot bear totally to break with it. Consequently she soon falls again, and as easily rises by a false repentance. If we let these considerations imprint in our souls a true idea and horror of sin, it will be the greatest step always to avoid it: for it is not possible to fall into sin, if we are truly penetrated with a sense of its monstrous impiety. But, this horror alone is not sufficient, unless we be also apprised of our danger of falling, and penetrated with a saving fear. "Fear God, and observe his commandments; for this is the whole man."—Eccl. xii. 13. A depraved world, by its maxims and examples, is a violent torrent, whose impetuous and almost irresistible stream bears down all it meets, unless we are strongly supported by a superior grace. But, though we fly the world, and by mortification become crucified and dead to its pleasures and inordinate desires, yet we always carry about with us our most dangerous enemy, our flesh and corrupt inclinations, our own body, the domestic enemies of man; to which we are by nature inseparably bound, and which, even out of charity to ourselves, we are obliged to nourish and cherish, though always combating against us. St. John Clim., Gr. 15; St. Bernard, Serm. 5. in Quadrag.; St. Ephrem, de sui Reprehens., &c. It is this which beats us with our own staff, and, though our necessary assistant, is, by the corruption of nature, become the principal actor and cause of our danger. The devil, that subtle spirit, by nature and experience crafty and malicious, comes in to join his efforts, and second our passions; sometimes by craft, sometimes by open attacks he seeks our ruin, and like a

roaring lion continually roves about seeking whom he may attack at a disadvantage and devour. For we fight not against flesh and blood only, but also against the princes and powers of hell, the rulers of this world of darkness, subtle aerial spirits, (Eph. vi.) Our only confidence is in God's assistance, and our own vigilance and flight on all occasions. "By the fear of the Lord every one declineth from evil."—Prov. xv. 28. We are like those timid animals, whose only preservation and security is their timorous nature, which makes them fly from the least appearance of danger. And this fear and watchfulness we must never lay aside; for no flight, no state can ever totally rid us of our enemies, or free us from danger. An apostle, under the eyes of the Son of God, perished in despair; a prince of the angels fell in heaven; so did Adam in paradise, though replenished with the highest graces, comforted by frequent visits of angels, and exposed only to one temptation. The apostles worked their salvation in fear and trembling; so did all the saints. "Blessed is the man that is always fearful." Let us then continually pray, "Pierce my heart with thy fear." Let us beg daily of God that we may never, for one moment, lose his wholesome fear. "Illuminate mine eyes, that I may never sleep in death."

Our third point clearly follows from hence, viz.: that we must shun the least danger, and avoid, with the utmost diligence, all occasions of sin. If we had a true horror of sin, and were conscious of our own weakness, the sight or very name of a house, company, or employ, which might be an inducement to sin, would make us tremble and start back. We cannot look down a precipice without horror, though there be no danger; dare we, then, approach so near to sin, and stare it in the face? At best there is but a step between us and sin; I say not between us and a dismal precipice, death, or tortures, but sin, that hideous monster, the greatest possible to be produced in nature; and can we be one moment without concern and fear? Dare we go meet it, voluntarily to expose ourselves as a prey to our merciless enemies, though we know that God has so severely threatened such presumption? Let no one rely on strong resolutions; how can these prevail when God, provoked at this rashness, abandons him? Let none flatter themelves, that they are above this or that temptation, and that such an occasion is not dangerous to them; to such St. Paul said: "Now you are filled, now you are become rich; without us you reign."—1 Cor. iv. 8. St. Chrysostom will convince them, that this intolerable pride exposes them to a

worse fall, and makes their case more desperate. They always carry a corruptible body about with them, and a flame will easily kindle those passions, which they flatter themselves are dead. But we must not only shun all occasions of sin, but most carefully avoid, as much as possible, all venial failings. A venial sin is an offence of God, and, by consequence, an exceeding great evil, for which, abstracting from the infinite merits of Christ, man can never duly atone. Can you call that small, which is an offence to God? God regards it as a great fault, and punishes it more severely than it is in the power of man to inflict; and do you give it so soft a name? "Can anything be small that dishonours God?"—St. Ans. Med. 2, p. 208, ed. Ben. Venial sins wound our souls, and would not we look on that man as mad, who should say carelessly, prick and cut my body with pins or knives, so that you wound it not mortally? Yet, thus we act with regard to our souls, which are infinitely more precious than our bodies. Again, venial sins, especially when deliberate, of habit, or gross negligence, very much impair charity, and expose the soul exceedingly to some dismal fall. We know the sacred oracle: "He who despiseth small things," &c.; and what signifies it how, if they at last damn the soul, any more than how the water enters, whether drop by drop, or in waves, so as to sink the ship. That soul, which falls by chance into mortal sin is not ordinarily so negligent and obdurate, nor, consequently, in so dangerous a state as a soul that is tepid and habituated in evil by a familiarity with venial sins.

I have not time to insist on the two other points, but shall briefly add, that our reflections on our own frailty and great impotency convince us we must have daily recourse to earnest prayer; and as often as we visit the blessed sacrament, hear Mass, or fall on our knees during morning or night prayers, or any other devotions, we must, with tears, and all the fervour of our souls, beg of our sweet Redeemer to look on this poor creature, whom he has created and redeemed, and never permit us to be separated from him; we must earnestly entreat him, by his tender love for us, and his precious wounds on the cross, that he suffer not his precious blood to be spilt for us in vain; that he never permit our weakness and malice to make void so much love, or so many favours heaped upon us. It is this constant and fervent prayer that must be our only anchor of hope, our only bulwark against our enemies. A soul not fenced by it is like a city without fortifications, exposed to every enemy. St.

Chrysostom, l. 2. de Orand. Deo. Though we make good resolutions at present, it is God alone that must preserve them, and crown them with victory; so we must continually apply to him never to suffer us to be lost or fall into sin; a misfortune we cannot think on without horror; but it is God alone that can secure us against it. Let us, then, repeat continually with fervour, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Lastly, it is a most necessary condition, daily to mortify our flesh, if we hope to get or maintain a mastery over our passions. It is a contradiction to allow a free scope, as far as is not expressly sinful, and still to hope it will be possible to restrain it within the bounds of duty. Our delicate flesh startles at the least mortification, and we seem to fly from it as from death. It is surprising we should have so totally degenerated from the primitive Christians, and have so forgotten the Gospel, which in every page inculcates it as one of the most essential points of Christian morality. How do St. Paul, St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. Jerome testify, that they chastised their flesh to bring it into subjection? Certainly we have not discovered any other easier way of overcoming temptations. I mean no extraordinary or great mortification, but only self-denials, which ought to be practised many times every day, and are very acceptable and meritorious in the sight of God, exceedingly beneficial to our souls, and conducive to a perfect mastery of ourselves. If our will be not accustomed to be frequently checked, it will often carry us beyond our duty and allegiance to God. Had you a furious wild beast, would you give it its liberty, or keep it chained up? Our will is this lion, this tiger. Self-will is our most dangerous enemy. "It robs heaven, it fills hell, it subjects the world to the devil, it renders the blood of Christ of no effect."*—St. Bern. Ah! that precious blood of Christ becomes by self-will spilt in vain for so many souls; this attacks heaven by its rebellions, and dares, against the voice of nature, to set itself up against God, and fly in the face of infinite majesty. If we allow it liberty, it will soon grow too strong for us; by condescending to it we increase its strength, and redouble its forces the next time it attacks us.

Nothing remains but to conclude with the words of the apostle: "As to the rest, brethren, be strengthened in the Lord and in the might of his power."—Eph. vi. 10. This must be our only

* Spoliat cœlum, ditat infernum, subjicit mundum diabolo, sanguinem Christi reddit vacuum.

confidence. "Put on the armour of God, that you may stand against the snares of the devil."—v. 11. Stand as soldiers always prepared for battle, armed with the coatmail of justice and piety; in all things taking the shield of faith, *i. e.*, penetrated with the truths of faith; by daily meditation renew a horror of sin and a fear of falling, which may direct and accompany all our actions, by which we may "be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of our wicked enemy," v. 16, and be excited to keep such watch over all our actions, "as to fly at the least sight of evil."—1 Thess. v. 22. To compass this, let us diligently make use of our morning and night examens to find out and shun all occasions, and to cut off all failings and deliberate imperfections. To bring our stubborn will to obedience, let us rejoice, in indifferent matters, to follow the will of another, receive all contradictions with joy and resignation, and curb it by frequent self-denials. A soul, that loves God, gladly embraces contradictions, and keeps so strict a watch to be irreproachable in the smallest thing that the least liberty or excess immediately excites in her a horror, and she flies even where there is scarcely the appearance of an enemy. But above all, let us observe this pressing advice of St. Paul: "In all prayer and supplication praying at all time in spirit; and in the same watching in all instance and supplication" (Eph. vi. 18); praying continually for this grace of perseverance for ourselves and the whole Church. If we are deficient in any part of this advice, we cannot hope for our crown; but the attending to it will not fail to bring us to that happiness.

DISCOURSE XLV.

ON AVOIDING THE OCCASIONS OF SIN.

1. To be victorious in our spiritual war, the capital point is an extreme solicitude and care to avoid the occasions and dangers of sin. As such animals, as have too strong enemies, are safe only by their fearfulness and flight, so reason alone suffices to teach us what instinct has engrafted in them; viz., that, being weakness itself, our security consists in our caution and timorousness. Even were we equal to our adversaries, it would be an extreme rashness and folly by choice to hazard a dangerous battle, when we had a sure means of conquering, merely by avoiding it; but

it is much more so, as the enemies we fear are so powerful and ourselves so weak. Fear is the mother of security: it is our strength, because it removes us from danger. "In the fear of the Lord is the confidence of strength."—Prov. xiv. 26. Brittle glasses are preserved whole only by being carefully kept out of the way of danger. An humble fear will certainly always secure us; but a presumptuous boldness will be sure to ruin us. The strongest pillars, the highest mountains of Libanus have been thrown down by being exposed to storms.

2. Not only our own weakness, but the conduct of God in the dispensation of the succour sets this incontestable truth in the clearest light. Those, who wilfully throw themselves into occasions of danger, cannot count upon his necessary assistance; nay, they may assure themselves he will not give it to them; for he himself, who is always faithful to his word, has most expressly declared this in many places, and the very interest of his glory obliges him to such a conduct; otherwise his succour would make us prove slothful and careless, instead of remaining watchful and humble. Such a rash presumption is a tempting of God, and this by all the different ways by which a creature can be capable of that crime. It is to ask, and even rely on a miracle without necessity. A man has an ordinary means of sure victory by the opportunity of flight; but by running on his enemy, he asks an extraordinary assistance of grace, *i. e.*, the most superfluous miracle. When the devil proposed to our Saviour to throw himself headlong down a precipice, that the angels might support and carry him, he rejected the illusion by answering: "It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." When God commanded Noe to build his ark, would it not have been a most insolent petition, if he had requested to have been preserved amidst the waters, without giving himself that trouble? or if Lot, amidst the flames of Sodom, had made a similar request rather than leave the city? In the case now before us, the miracle asked is not less idle, nor the presumption less extravagant. Secondly, it tempts God, not indeed by restraining the bounds of his mercy, as the Bethulians did, but by extending them beyond the limits he has fixed for them, and pretending to give him the law, and prescribe to him the manner, in which we are to be succoured by him, thus inverting the ordinary course and rule of his providence in the dispensation of his graces; but these are granted by him according to his divine order and decrees, not by our will or choice. Thirdly, this presumption likewise tempts

God in another manner, viz., by hypocrisy and insincerity, as the Jews tempted Christ, asking whether it was lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar. For is it not a mocking and tempting of God to implore his succour, and to pray, as he has taught us, that he lead us not into temptation, and yet, at the same time, to run ourselves into temptation, to become our own tempters? This monstrous contradiction is openly to dissemble with, and notoriously attempt and impose upon God.

3. It is not to be wondered that such a criminal insult should deserve to be punished by the Almighty, and whoever should be guilty of it abandoned to perish in his insolence. This the oracle of truth itself assures us, declaring that "He who loves the danger shall perish in it."

Though the soul should not proceed any farther in the sin, the very consenting to this danger is itself a mortal sin, both against her allegiance due to God, and against the charity she owes to herself and the care of her own salvation. To expose rashly our corporal life is a mortal sin; how much more to expose that of our soul, our eternity!

If we voluntarily go into an occasion of sin, we act the part of the devil against ourselves, are our own tempters, and much more dangerously so than the devils could be; we march out to meet our enemies, and join and exceedingly strengthen them against us; for by this we court the world to deceive us, give to the devil the greatest power over us, and heighten concupiscence to the utmost. In an occasion, the tempting object strikes our senses near, immediately, and most violently. Experience shows how strongly an object acts when present, especially when it be a criminal one, attempered and agreeable to the senses and to concupiscence. The impression on the organ passes to the heart with an almost irresistible power of enchanting it, and the whole man is in a flame, which he himself has kindled. We must add, that the soul is, of herself, on the edge of the precipice, just ready and disposed to slide down it by the natural tendency of concupiscence, especially if she sought the occasion. By this it appears, that she has not a present just horror of the danger and evil, and that she is even inclined to it by a secret affection and passion; for she seeks not the occasion, but because she is pleased with it, and finds a relish in it. To this bent of nature, to this weight of concupiscence, and to this affection already admitted and wilfully indulged in the heart, if we add the impression, which the presence of the object makes, setting all the

fuel of concupiscence in a violent flame, how is it possible not to be swallowed up in the gulf, particularly when abandoned by God, as such a soul is sure to be?

The devil owes his fatal success, in destroying daily thousands of souls, to this artifice; he at first seduces them into the occasions, and thence he easily draws them into all his snares at pleasure. He represents the occasions as stripped of what makes them most formidable or frightful, and engages the unwary to embrace them, full of a presumptuous confidence in their own strength and resolutions. When they are once engaged in them, they are now his captives at command. How did the first sinner of the human race fall? She fixed her eyes with curiosity on the fruit, which God had forbidden her to eat; she saw it agreeable to the sight, and considered it till her heart was delighted with the object; then the devil with ease drew her into that transgression, which, being imitated by her husband, entailed guilt on all their posterity.

David was a saint, a prophet, a king, according to God's own heart; yet a dangerous occasion, the sight of a woman, which he did not shut his eyes against, was a snare in which he fell. Solomon, the wisest of men, by intermarrying with idolatrous women, was so far blinded and infatuated by them, as to build temples to, and prostrate himself before Chamos, the idol of the Moabites, and those of all his other women. The strong Sampson owed his ruin to a like occasion. St. Peter had been witness of Christ's greatest miracles, and had seen him in glory, yet was so weak as to forswear himself when engaged in an occasion. Will not we reeds tremble?

4. The law and light of nature dictate to us this obligation; for what forbids an effect forbids also its cause, or what leads to it; and whatever commands an end commands likewise the necessary means of attaining it. By this principle, whosoever wills the occasion wills in it the sin.*

Christ's positive command, as to this point, is likewise the most peremptory and express: "If thy hand," &c.—Matt. xviii. 8; Mark, ix. 42.

This is not to be literally understood, as if it could be ever necessary to cut off a hand or pluck out an eye; but the words are thus strong, to show us that whatever is a stumbling-block to our souls, or an occasion of any sin, though it be as dear even as

* "Qui vult causam, vult etiam effectum," says the philosopher's axiom.

an eye, or as necessary as a hand, must be parted with, let it cost us ever so much, and the separation be ever so painful; for can a hand be cut off, or an eye torn out without pain? "Spare nothing to spare thy soul," says St. Jerome, Ep. 13.

Our divine Saviour, mild in all his precepts, here seems severe, and even cruel; such is the importance and indispensable necessity of this precept. We must further observe, that he commands us to quit this occasion instantly, without deliberating or the least dallying; not by halves, but entirely and at once: he did not say, strike the eye or wound the hand, but totally pluck it out—cut it off: not only this, but cast it from thee, lest, if it be left even near thee, it become again an occasion of sin to thee.* Not to shun an occasion is a formal disobedience, an open, declared transgression of this so very strict precept.

2. To shun the occasions of sin with all possible diligence is one of the most important rules in our spiritual warfare; and it is an essential duty of every true penitent to foresee, avoid, and arm himself against them. A neglect of this duty is a fatal source of ruin to innumerable souls. Almost all sinners pretend to be penitents at certain periods; on certain festivals in the year, every one seems touched with sentiments of compunction; but after the solemnity is over, what change appears in the lives of the generality of persons? After their penance, they follow the same course of life, frequent the same company and the same dangerous places, the very presence of which cannot but excite and inflame the old passions. The crime, indeed, affrights, but the danger of it does not alarm them. They resolve to renounce swearing, but never think seriously of suppressing hasty motions by silence under them. They promise no more to return to the sins, which were but the consequences of their slothful, unprofitable, sensual life, of their familiarities in conversation, or licentiousness or superfluity in discourse, and the like; yet they change nothing in these causes; as to their other disorders, they still pursue the courses which lead to them. Alas! a conversion implies an universal change of conduct. Our blessed Saviour, whose resurrection was the model of a true repentance, or rising from sin, being risen from the dead, did not appear in public as before, or converse with the multitudes, but showed himself only privately to his chosen disciples, not that he feared any further violence from the Jews, being then immortal, but to give

* "Nulla securitas vicino serpente dormire."—St. Jerome.

us an example how great a change a conversion ought to produce, not only in a man's heart, but also in his exterior comportment and whole life. Let every one, after this, consult but his own experience: if he ever followed the same plan of life after a repentance of transgressions, he will find that he as often returned again to the same; the presence of an occasion made him forget all his good purposes and resolutions: the same dangers always found him again the same person.

6. Some will allege, that they have now taken an effectual resolution to stand firm, and are armed against the danger: but these sentiments of fervour, this horror of the evil are awakened under the temptation: in the occasion they are not the same persons: abandoned by grace, in punishment of their rash presumption, blinded by passion, and their will enervated, they are an easy prey. The devil is sensible of this; accordingly he is not alarmed on seeing a soul make ever so great a stir in preparing herself for repentance, and thus to break his chains. Provided he can but throw her into a lethargy with regard to the occasions, he is sure that, though she should truly rise at present, he shall soon recover her again on the first occasions, and hamper her worse than ever in his nets; in the same manner as Pharaoh, his type, easily consented to let the Israelites go to sacrifice in the desert, upon condition of their leaving their families and baggage behind, being assured by these pledges of their return under his tyranny. A bird, held by a thread tied to its foot, may spring up and flutter as if it had recovered its liberty, but is pulled back at pleasure.

7. If we cast our eyes upon the holy penitents, who shine as lamps to direct sinners in their conversion, we shall see that there was not one of them who did not with his sins renounce the entire former course of his life, and set out on a new plan of devotion and regularity, greater retirement, &c.; above all, quitting company, and other more dangerous occasions, though ever so necessary or agreeable. St. Gregory, Hom. 24. in Evang., observes, that Peter is said, for some time after his conversion, to have returned to his profession of a fisherman; but that Matthew, quitting his secular life, bid an eternal farewell to the revenue department, because this latter occupation was a dangerous occasion of sin, not the former. What an alteration in the whole conduct of St. Mary Magdalen, when she was converted to God! It would have been a chimerical project to have pretended to

forsake her sins, without changing the whole tenor of her life. The saints, long strengthened in habits of virtue and grace, even many from their infancy, owed their preservation from sin only to their extreme caution in shunning all dangers; in which their nicety and fearfulness appear even surprising. Habitual victories over their passions, and long courses of universal mortification and self-denials, had subdued in them concupiscence as much as this mortal state will permit; yet they feared whatever might awaken it; they said, that, if it seemed dormant, it was only hid under the embers, and trembled at the sight of whatever could kindle it again. How much greater is this necessity and obligation in penitents, who had long groaned under habits, and fortified their passions; and whose scars, scarcely yet well healed, are easily opened again; whose senses are lively to catch and imbibe; whose concupiscence is open and greedy to suck in the poison that is presented?

This extreme caution is more particularly necessary with regard to cases of impurity.—See Tent., pages 2090, 2091.

8. Some occasions are called remote, which expose indeed to some little danger or incitement to sin, but such as is easily overcome. A person is not bound to shun all these, because the task would be impossible; "otherwise he should go out of the world." 1 Cor. v. 10. For the world, all states, and every step we take in them, are full of such occasions. "Creatures are made in temptation to the souls of men, and into a trap to the feet of the foolish.—Wisdom, xiv. 11. But it is always a crime to court or seek such occasions, this being the way to make them become immediate dangers. Moreover, we are bound to labour to diminish these occasions, shunning at least the greater, and all frequency or familiarity; whereas this would also render them immediate. For the rest, we must arm ourselves continually against them, especially by assiduous mortification, prayer, and watchfulness, taking care that our provision of strengtheners and antidotes be always fresh. The purity and innocence of our hearts and consciences depend very much upon this vigilance, and are proportioned to it. How watchful were the saints in this point! For this reason St. John Baptist chose the wilderness from his infancy.

9. Some occasions are immediate, and these require our greatest diligence, both to discover and to shun them. Some indeed are internal, and cannot be avoided. These we must powerfully

arm ourselves against, and with extreme diligence speedily overcome, and render them only remote dangers. So great is the unhappy propensity to any sin created by a habit.

Certain external occasions are sometimes also of such a nature, that it may not be in our power to avoid them; as if a soldier, who is engaged to serve, finds such from his very profession itself. The most earnest endeavours must be used, that may convert them into remote ones. Nor will God's assistance be wanting, who preserved the children in the furnace, Daniel in the lion's den, and St. Thecla in the flames, when not their voluntary rashness, but his providence, had placed them in those dangers, only for the greater glory of his name.

10. Occasions are either relative or absolute. Those are called relative which are not such of themselves, but only in regard to certain persons; for though a thing be lawful in itself, yet if it be prudently feared, from the circumstances of a person, that he will by it fall into sin, this is an immediate occasion to him, though lawful to others. Through the corruption of the world, such are, to a great many, war, traffic, magistracies, the professions of the law, &c., by which some men are accustomed to be drawn into swearing, cheating, injustice, calumnies, hatred, lying, or other sins. Such persons cannot be absolved, unless they have first converted these into remote occasions, or renounce these dangerous professions. It is the more necessary to be solicitous and watchful in this matter, as it is through the neglect of confessors herein, that we see numberless abuses and enormous sins reign in many trades and states of life, so that it is impossible for men to exercise some of them to their temporal profit, without losing their souls, as St. Charles Borromeo complains, Instr. Confess., par. 4, p. 767. "There are many employments, which can scarcely, or not at all, be exercised without sin. To these it is necessary that a soul never return after her conversion," says St. Gregory the Great, Hom. 21. in Evang.

Absolute occasions of sin are those which are such of their own nature, and to all persons, as bad company, impious books, lewd discourse, ordinary stage entertainments, the sight of any object dangerous to the heart, &c.

11. Whatever the occasion be, if it appears, we are instantly to fly with Joseph as soon as he had heard the lewd suggestion of his mistress. No excuses are to be admitted; no deliberation, no delay. A man who sees himself in the midst of flames does not reason or examine; his danger prevents all reflections; it

is enough that he sees himself going to perish; therefore, he must do everything to save himself.

You will say: "What will the world say? Such a retreat will give scandal," &c. Alas! not the separation from, but the continuance of the occasion will excite the suspicions and rumours of the public. After all, what matters it to consider what the world will say? Is it not our first and only duty to save our souls? We are rather to lose all things than ever hazard this, or forfeit the grace of God.

But men cannot be persuaded that such and such are to them immediate occasions. They do not even see that they offend in them. This insensibility is no mark of their innocence, but only shows that their heart is more corrupted by the long slavery of the passion, and so far blinded and seared, as not to perceive its wounds. A limb already stupefied by the poison feels not the bite of the serpent; but this is only a sign that the venom has already made great progress. The evil is not so great, as long as the heart is sensible of it; for it must not then be quite entirely corrupted.

But sinners find blind guides who flatter their passions, and assure them against occasions, as if they were not so dangerous to them. We must, therefore, with the saints, not listen to such deceivers, or suffer ourselves to be lulled by them into such a snare. Though an angel from heaven were to announce such doctrine, contrary to the Gospel, we are not to hear him. In bodily danger, should we follow the advice of those who would send us into places suspected of the plague? Do we believe any sort of advisers or consult enemies, who wish that we should perish, whether such or such roads be safe? Do we expose our treasures in places frequented by robbers? Do we trust a vessel to every pilot, or believe every information, when there is danger of running on shores full of rocks and shoals? Ah! "The sons of the world are more prudent than the sons of light." We carry the inestimable treasure of grace in brittle vessels, and shall we run over rocks without fear of breaking them? It is a light; and shall we go where furious winds blow on all sides, without any fear of losing it?

12. Some occasions are involuntary, either physically, as bad company to a man in prison; or morally, as a wife inciting to anger, swearing, &c., to her husband; the profession of arms to a soldier accustomed by it to certain irregularities. For it is not lawful for the husband to forsake his wife without her consent,

or for the soldier his profession without leave. But such persons are to convert these into remote occasions by assiduous labour and prayer; nor are they ordinarily to be absolved till they have given proofs of this being strenuously effected. When the occasion cannot be renounced without some very great loss or temporal danger, it may be allowed the person to try to make it only a remote occasion; but if it continue still triumphant, it must be forsaken, though as necessary as a hand. "Penance is false, when the penitent does not depart from a profession, either at court or in business, which he is not able to perform without sin."—Conc. Gen. Later. 2, can. 22. Pope Innocent XI. condemned these propositions; n. 62: "An immediate occasion is not to be shunned, when there is some lawful and profitable reason not to shun it;" and n. 63: "It is lawful to seek directly an immediate occasion of sinning, for our own or our neighbour's spiritual good." If the occasion be very urgent and dangerous, a penitent is not to be absolved, even the first time, till it be removed, *e. g.*, a concubine expelled. Greater severity, likewise, is necessary as to occasions that consist in things quite idle and superfluous, as in frequenting ale houses, which are occasions of quarrels, lewd discourse, excess, &c., bad company, promiscuous dancing, routs, &c. If the occasion should recur only once a year, as at a certain fair, it may still be immediate.

See elsewhere on bad company, scandal, &c.

DISCOURSE XLVI.

ON THE PREDOMINANT PASSIONS, AND EXAMINATION GENERAL AND PARTICULAR.

1. Souls have a great disposition towards some certain passion or other. This natural bent, which arises from the very frame, and is interwoven in the constitution of man's mind and body, is usually strengthened by habit. By an early watchfulness against it, this enemy might have been easily subdued in its infancy; but this is a rare happiness of but few chosen souls. It is the misfortune of the generality blindly to foster and cherish it, even from their tender years, and often without discovering its malice, even disguising it in many shapes to themselves under the name of some virtue. This is the origin of our master or ruling

passions, which hold the principal empire in our hearts. They commonly subject to themselves, in some degree, even our other vices, which assail us the more dangerously under their banners, and which in a concurrence often yield to and are swallowed up by them, as Aaron's rod, converted into a serpent, devoured those of the Egyptian magicians.*

It was ambition that governed Cæsar in his triumphs: this ruled his virtues as well as his vices; influenced his clemency as well as his vanity; and, had he lived in the old Roman days, might have made him aim at praise by sobriety and temperance. This predominant passion is often the source of all or most of the sins which we commit.

2. This master passion, though the great corrupter of our virtues, and the spring of our other vices, is generally unknown itself. The inordinate fondness we bear it spreads so much darkness over our eyes, as to hinder us from discovering this idol. It frequently happens that a person practises great austerities, and vigorously resists all other passions, yet leaves this uncontrolled. From this blindness in discerning, and this difficulty in resisting this passion, proceed the general miscarriages of souls in their spiritual warfare. The devil lets them, without

* All spread their charms, but charms not all alike;
On different senses different objects strike;
Hence different passions more or less inflame,
As strong or weak, the organs of the frame;
And hence our master passion in the breast,
Like Aaron's serpent, swallows up the rest.
Pope's Essay on Man, v. 117.

Each vital humour, which should feed the whole,
Soon flows to this, in body or in soul;
Whatever warms the heart or fills the head,
As the mind opens and its functions spread,
Imagination plies her dangerous art,
And pours it all upon the peccant part.
Nature its mother, habit is its nurse,
Wit, spirit, faculties, but make it worse;
Reason itself but gives it edge and power,
As heaven's blest beam turns vinegar more sour.
Ib., v. 129, 138.

That very Cæsar, born in Scipio's days,
Had aim'd, like him, by chastity at praise.
Lucullus, whom frugality could charm,
Had roasted turnips in the Sabine farm.
Id. Ethic. Ep. 1, v. 216, 219.

difficulty, do some good works, and labour against other inferior passions, providing they do but leave him this untouched, which is the fortress by which he resides in them, and commands them at pleasure. Do not we see many great reciters of prayers, rigorous fasters, strict and severe in renouncing worldly pleasures, yet, all this while, slaves to their own whims, or to covetousness, vanity, and pride, love of softness, sloth, and ease, sensual friendships, melancholy, anger, &c. The great Tertullian, with all his austerities, never overcame that pride by which he became a scandal to the Church. Many multiply such exercises as are pleasing to their humour, but shun what is disagreeable to it, or proper for mortifying their favourite passions. This is so tender a part, that they cannot bear to be touched in it ever so lightly. When God commanded Saul to destroy the Amalekites, he easily obeyed as to the multitude: but then he spared Agag, the king, and preserved what was most precious in his eyes.—1 Kings, xv. 9. So do we readily sacrifice the common passions, yet screen and shelter our favourite idols. Men frequent the sacraments, but carry these serpents in their breasts into the very sanctuary. O what confessions! What sacraments! Even in sickness, and to death, they continue to cherish them. When do we see the miser renounce the love of money at the approach of death? On the contrary, he seems then to cleave faster to his Mammon, insomuch that many cannot be engaged, without the greatest difficulty, to settle their affairs by a timely will. What! to make over all! this is what they cannot think of, though dying. We observe the same of other favourite habits, as pride, impatience, &c., which seem only to grow stronger in the last agonies of life. The reason is, men have formed their consciences to this passion; it has passed into nature: its excesses, by custom, appear innocent.

3. Nevertheless, as long as this is spared, the soul will be subject to perpetual relapses, because their secret source ever subsists; as long as this is the idol of our hearts, our virtues being tainted by it are no better than illusion; our painful exercises without fruit; and our advances towards virtue, in a great measure, lost labour. As a drop of poison, spread through all our veins, infects the whole habit of our body, so this leaven diffuses itself over all our actions, and defiles our very virtues. This one enemy is often a greater obstacle to the empire of grace, and to its motions in the soul, than all the other passions together; as one powerful rebel will make greater havoc in a

kingdom, and do more mischief than many petty disturbers of the peace. This is also a perpetual obstacle to our dying to ourselves, and to our union with God. Though we should be without ambition, avarice, jealousy, or sloth, if, *e. g.*, any sensual fondness still reign in our hearts, self-love thereby maintains its full empire in us.

On the other side, if this passion be rooted out, the others will fall with it, or, at least, be very much weakened by its conquest; as if the main pillar be knocked down, it draws the whole building after it; if the general be killed, the army is easily routed; if the head be struck off, the body remains a trunk without life or motion. As then the subduing of our predominant passions is our most difficult task, and, at the same time, a victory most necessary, and attended with the greatest advantages, these being the prime movers of all the irregularities of the heart, and the ordinary source of the damnation of souls, it is the first point in our spiritual warfare, that we diligently study and discover these sources of our dangers and miseries, which is to be done by humble prayer, begging the divine light to show us to ourselves; secondly, by a close examination and strict watch over all the motions of our hearts; thirdly, by the advice of a faithful director, to whom we are to lay open our interior, and who may be able, impartially, to judge of the hidden springs of our affections and actions.

When our principal enemy is discovered, we are to single it out from amongst the rest, and to use a singular diligence in all our meditations, prayers, frequenting the sacraments, examinations, and in all our thoughts and actions to arm ourselves against it, shun its more dangerous occasions, and acquire the contrary virtue in an heroical degree. We must make this victory our principal affair: nothing will make us more sure to succeed in an undertaking than if we apply ourselves wholly to it, be entirely penetrated with it, and pursue it, without dividing our earnestness upon different objects. We must, in some measure, imitate the king of Syria, who, fighting against Achab, the king of Israel, gave this order to his troops: "Do not fight against little or great, but against the king of Israel alone"—2 Par. xviii. 30; and he being accordingly slain, his whole army was defeated by that one stroke.

4. A great and necessary means to overcome our passions is a continual watchfulness over, and strict daily examination of, our hearts and all our actions. The care of our souls is the cultivating of virtue in them, and it may be compared to that of a

vineyard, or of a garden, which is never at an end, but requires a continual pruning. Vices or weeds, since the corruption of nature by sin, are, as it were, the natural produce of its soil. They must be diligently plucked up as soon as they begin to shoot; if this be neglected, they very soon overspread the whole face of the field. "I passed over the ground of the slothful man, and the vineyard of the foolish man; and behold nettles had covered the whole, and thorns had spread over its face, and the fence of stone was destroyed."—Prov. xxiv. 30. Every Christian must say, during the whole course of his mortal life: "It is now the time of pruning."—Cant. ii. 12. Upon which words, St. Bernard writes thus, Serm. 58. in Cant., n. 10: "Who can imagine that he has ever so entirely pruned away all that is superfluous, as to think he has no more to pare off? Believe me; what have been cut off, shoot up again; what have been expelled, return; and what have been extinguished, revive. It is doing very little to have once pruned all; we must be often, nay always pruning; because if we do not deceive ourselves, we always find enough, that requires paring away. Whether thou wilt or no, the Jabusite dwells within thy bounds; he may be subdued, but can never be extirpated."

5. A physician always examines to see how his patient goes on; what changes happen in him; whether for better or for worse; what remedies and precautions are necessary against future dangers. In places besieged; nay, in time of peace, in frontier places the garrisons make every evening their rounds, to see what posture everything is in, and whether in a good condition of defence, and what dangers or snares may threaten, what breaches have been made, and how they are to be repaired. There is far more necessity of the like care in the soul, as the enemy's wiles are far greater and more difficult to be discovered. Every one, therefore, ought daily to examine the state of his soul, and in his morning exercise to make or renew his resolutions of shunning the particular occasions and dangers, and of seizing opportunities of the practice of virtue; and these must be strengthened by prayer for that end. It is still more necessary, that in his evening exercise, after begging the light of the Holy Ghost, he examine his thoughts, and more dangerous and principal actions and words of the day; then by a short act of contrition repent of, and blot out his failings, and arm and strengthen himself by good purposes of shunning dangers, and employing particular means and antidotes for the future.

The royal prophet gives us this lesson, Ps. iv.: "What things

you say in your hearts, be pierced with compunction for in your beds," or evening recollection. By which words he exhorts never to neglect this evening examination, and acts of compunction, as St. Chrysostom observes, who adds, in Ps. 4. t. 5, p. 19. ed. Mont.: "Let these things be done every day; and never compose yourself to sleep, O man! till you shall have first considered in mind the things you have done in the day, and you will be strengthened against the dangers of relapse the following day. What you do in money affairs, never let two days pass without taking an account of your expenses, lest forgetfulness bring on confusion; do this also in your actions every day. In the evening, demand of your soul an exact account, and condemn her in your mind for all she has sinned in; punish her, and command her no more to reiterate offences. So great will be the profit of this exercise, that, if faithfully practised, it will make us perfect in one month. Let us never neglect so great a good."

6. The very heathen philosophers teach us this most advantageous means to overcome our passions. It was the saying of one of the Grecian principal sages:* "Before a man goes out, let him consider and form a plan of his actions; after them, let him reflect how and in what manner he has performed each." Pythagoras also† laid this precept on all his followers, that every one, when returned, should examine himself: In what hast thou transgressed? What hast thou done at its proper time? What not? And the golden verses, which bear his name, deliver this rule in these terms—v. 39, 44: "Never close your eyes to sleep before you have carefully run over in mind all the actions of the day, in order, saying to yourself: Where have I been? What have I done? What have I omitted? Approve the well done; but correct and punish yourself for what was ill." A Roman philosopher is thus described by Seneca:‡ "Before going to his rest at night, he asks his soul: What evil hast thou healed to-day? What vice hast thou resisted? I myself call myself to account every day, and plead my own cause. When the light is removed, and all is silent, it is my custom to search the whole day; I consider and weigh my actions and words; I hide nothing from myself; I pass over nothing; for I can say to myself: Take care thou doest that no more; in that disputation thou wast too obstinate or vehement; do not again enter into a contest with the unlearned; they will not learn, who have never applied them-

* Cleobulus apud Diog. Laert. † Apud Laert., l. 8. ‡ L. 3. De Ira, c. 36

selves to the study of truth. Thou spokest to another with too great freedom or too harshly: take care for the future not only that what thou sayest be the truth, but also that he, to whom thou speakest, can bear such a truth."

How much more ought a Christian, by this practice, to call himself to a rigorous account every day, to prevent the severity of God's tribunal, by judging himself severely; to discover his most subtle enemies and sins (for many will escape him under the folds of self-love, without this care); and stop the growth of hidden passions, by detecting and nipping them in the bud?

7. Besides this daily general examination, there is another recommended very much by eminent servants of God, called the particular one. This is made wholly upon one particular vice or virtue, which is the subject of a person's principal endeavours, and which he has singled out as more necessary for him to apply himself to. The predominant passion, to which we find ourselves the most subject, and its contrary virtue, must be the subject of it to the end of our lives. This is an enemy we must never have done with, as the devil will never cease to be blowing it up again into new flames. By this means we shall chiefly make its conquest our characteristical virtue, in like manner as those saints who, being by nature inclined to choler, have made themselves most particularly eminent for their singular meekness and sweetness of temper. St. Ignatius prescribes, a quarter of an hour before dinner for this particular examination, and a reflection on its subject. But it may be joined with the general examen at evening, which a person may make with a particular attention to that vice, and to the resolutions and means he had proposed to himself against it. The predominant passion may be alone its subject; but when it shall have been well overcome, though it still requires a particular attention to watch and keep it under, and must be always continued a partial object of this examen, yet then some other virtue or vice may be joined with it; and this every year or month a new one. Did we but every year perfectly extirpate one vice, and acquire eminently one virtue, we should soon be saints, as a great author says.

8. In this particular examen, we must apply ourselves to consider only this passion, to discover its motions in us, to see its progress or abatements, better to penetrate its dangers and malice, and to renew ourselves daily in the resolution of entirely extirpating it. It is a profitable means, to enjoin ourselves some punishment upon a transgression, immediately or in our evening's

examination. "I have seen true servants of God," says St. John Climacus (Gr. 16, n. 148), "who having, on some particular occasion, omitted something of their regular austerity, took immediately the generous resolution to pass the whole night standing, thus punishing themselves."—p. 641. We must confess often the faults which this passion shall cause us to commit. Thus we shall more seriously condemn them, and draw down upon ourselves more especial graces to surmount them, conceive a greater confusion of them, and be more upon our guard against them; we shall, likewise, by such frequent careful confessions, acquire a singular purity of heart and conscience. We ought to practise every day some particular austerity against this passion. This will humble it, and awake our attention continually against it. We must frequently entertain ourselves with pious persons, or read or meditate on certain motives against it. This will make daily deeper impressions on our hearts, both of the love and earnest desire of the contrary virtue, and of the hatred, detestation, and horror of the vice. Experience will show us that our hearts will hence draw fresh ardour to extirpate it, that our souls will be filled therewith, and we be preserved ever watchful against any surprises by it. In our ordinary meditations on other subjects we must be careful to draw, and dwell in particular on some affections and resolutions against this enemy. In all our prayers, at least at morning and night, at Mass, and in frequenting the sacraments, we must remember most earnestly to beg of God this victory.

9. We must inform ourselves, by pious books, or from skilful directors, what are the means, both general and particular, by which this passion is to be overcome, and this virtue obtained; what are the dangers, occasions, and incentives of the former, and how they are to be avoided; what are the opportunities of practising the latter; what its acts, both interior, consisting in self-denials and ejaculations suiting our circumstances, and of which we must have a choice collection hoarded up in our breasts to use frequently; and exterior, consisting in outward exercises of this virtue, as of patience, humiliations, &c. Our resolutions of these particular means ought to be often renewed, as in our morning and evening prayers: without this precaution the best and strongest weaken by degrees. We must be very faithful in the execution of them all; for inconstancy and infidelity in them would not only make them fruitless; but produce in us a fickleness and incapacity of succeeding in any good. To avoid this

danger, our resolutions must be such as are practicable, and not too much multiplied. "In case of relapses still into the same faults, it is a sign that man has not totally removed the first cause of his sins;" says St. Basil (Reg. Brev. qu. 189). "For, as if a man lop off only the branches of a tree, it will shoot again, because the root is not plucked up; so, whoever would preserve himself from sin, must mount up to the first causes, and carefully remove them. Thus he, who contests and looks with envy on persons, whom he sees more esteemed than himself, must seek his remedy in humility, that he may no more fall a prey to passions, which arise from vainglory."

10. Hence we see, that passions and temptations, if made a right use of, are a means of acquiring perfection in the contrary virtues. In overcoming pride, we learn true humility; we obtain chastity by triumphing over impurity; meekness by vanquishing anger; and so of other virtues. When God is pleased to call a soul to the eminent practice of some virtue, he chooses means worthy of himself and his divine invention, in which human prudence loses itself. He often permits temptations of the contrary vice, that by the victories over it he may inspire a soul with his favourite virtues in a more eminent degree of perfection, and make them take deeper root, and make greater impressions in her. Thus he manifested the glory of his Son by insults and contumelies, and was pleased to establish his Church, and make it flourish by the blood of its children. We are then not to lose courage under temptations; but labour most strenuously to vanquish them by attaining the opposite virtues.

DISCOURSE XLVII.

ON SLOTH.

1. Almighty God is represented in the parable (Matt. xi.) as the master of the vineyard, inviting all men to work in the same, and making them this reproach: "Why do you stand all the day idle?" These words are addressed to us, and are a reproach of our sloth, and an invitation to labour. We are bound to labour; this is an obligation, which we owe to God, to ourselves, and to the commonwealth of mankind. Almighty God laid it upon us by the condition of our creation, and by the law of penance.

Even in the state of innocence, "God took man, and put him into the paradise of pleasure, to dress it and to keep it."—Gen. ii. 15. The employment allotted him was, without intermission, to praise his Creator as the angels in heaven do; and also to prune and dress the garden, which was his habitation. The earth indeed spontaneously yielded its fruits and flowers, and represented itself to man covered with all its riches; nevertheless he was commanded to prune and dress it. This labour was to him a pleasure, yet necessary; because he was created diligently to exercise both his mind and body in employments suiting his dignity, organs, and faculties.

2. This was the condition of man in his original state of innocence. Labour was then enjoined him as an occupation and a pleasure. Since his fall it is commanded him in a very different, and a much more severe manner, as a painful punishment. It is now the wages of sin no less than death is. No sooner had man sinned than he was condemned to sickness, to a thousand pains and fatigues, and to constant labour. God cursed the earth in his work, and pronounced this sentence upon him: "With labour and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life." And again, "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the earth."—Gen. ii. 17, 19. Here is no exception of state and condition. He does not say to some, you shall wet the earth with your sweats: and to others, you shall have nothing to do but to glut yourself with its dainties. Here is no distinction of birth or fortune. Sin is common to all; so likewise its punishment is extended to all. "Great labour is created for all men; and a heavy yoke is upon the children of Adam, from the day of their coming out of the womb of their mother until the day of their burial into the mother of all."—Eccles. xi. 1. We must take notice, that this law of labour is for all men; this heavy yoke is laid on all the children of Adam; "from him that sitteth on a throne of glory, unto him that is humbled in earth and ashes; from him that weareth the purple, even to him that is covered with rough linen."—Eccles. xl. 3, 4. Every man must say, "I am poor, and in labours from my youth."—Ps. lxxxvii. 16. Not to labour is to rebel a second time against God. By the first rebellion man said: "I will not serve."—Jer. ii. I will not obey. By the second he says, I will not undergo the sentence of God, and the punishment of my first disobedience.

3. Labour is a necessary duty of penance for all mankind to satisfy for past sins; but it is still more essential for the purpose

of preserving us from sin.* Idleness made the Israelites in the wilderness fall into intemperance and criminal diversions. Exod. xxxii. 6. David was invincible in the exercises of war; but fell into adultery and murder, by sloth at home. A heathen poet asking the question, why a man fell into adultery, answers himself, that the cause was clear, because he had abandoned himself first to sloth. Hence, the Egyptian monks made labour a capital point in their penitential lives.* It was their maxim, as Cassian mentions, that a monk who exercised himself in labour had only one devil to fight against; but that a slothful monk was tyrannised over by innumerable unclean spirits. Hence, sloth is a most dangerous capital sin, and as it is styled by fathers and divines, the mother of all vices; and it is the capital rule of a spiritual life: "Be always doing something, that the devil may always find you busy."

4. Idleness is likewise the destruction of all virtues; for it roots out of the heart their very seeds. St. Bonaventure compares sloth to a slow hectic fever, which imperceptibly drains all the vigour of the body, and leaves it without strength. Physicians lay down as a general principle, that distempers, which proceed from decay, are of all others the most fatal, and out of the reach of almost any remedies. So it is in the spiritual diseases of the soul; for softness enervates and destroys her courage and strength, without which she is incapable of exerting herself to practise any virtue; it dries up the very juice of virtue, and blasts all the good qualities of the mind. This vice is the more to be feared because it makes its assaults insensibly, and is not perceived by those over whom it tyrannizes. They say: What harm do we do? We neither swear, nor steal, nor injure others. The malice of this evil consists chiefly in omissions, on which account it is the more dangerous. For though it does not always appear like a firebrand in sin, its obscure indolence kindles a flame in the passions, which is not perceived till it be too late to be extinguished. Moreover, it is no less contemptible in the eyes of the world than it is contrary to God and his grace. Even the world requires animation and courage in its votaries; and the slothful person is its refuse and outcast, left to putrefy on his own dunghill, the abhorrence of heaven and earth, plunged in an insensible lethargy.

* "Multam malitiam docuit otiositas."—Eccl. xxxiii.

† "Non propter corporis neces itatem, sed propter animæ salutem;" says St. Jerome.

5. He is also a public nuisance, and an enemy to the commonwealth of mankind. All men are bound to contribute their part towards the maintenance and happiness of the community, as they receive their necessary succours from others. This the order of the universe and the laws of justice require. Providence has appointed different states as necessary in the world, but has allotted to each their employments, and left none idle. Those who, by the place which they occupy in the world, are exempt from manual labour, have still many and weighty obligations and occupations; those who have none by their circumstances, are obliged to choose for themselves such as are serious, useful, and suitable, and to employ themselves in them with great earnestness. Idleness, in any state, is an injury to God's providence, a deviating from his invariable law and rule, and a sin against his justice. It is an injustice to men; for by sloth a person becomes a useless burthen to the state. It is a maxim which allows no exemption, that "if any one will not work, neither let him eat;" 2 Thess. iii. 10. Among the wise Egytians, idleness was regarded as a crime against the State, and punished with death. Amasis, one of the greatest kings of that country, appointed judges in every district for this only purpose; before whom all the inhabitants were obliged to appear from time to time, to give an account of their work, and of their whole family, and how they employed their whole time. Whoever was found not to have been diligent, was put to death as an unprofitable and burdensome member of the commonwealth, as Herodotus relates. The laws of Lycurgus for the Lacedemonians were not less positive in this point.* And those of Draco and Solon ordered all persons guilty of sloth to be prosecuted before the magistrate, and, if convicted, to be put to death. The kings of Egypt obliged the governors of each province to be always carrying on some public work, in which all hands might be employed. Hence, the stupendous canals and other great works, with which that country was filled. The Romans, till they degenerated from their severe virtue into sloth, luxury, and all sorts of vice, upon the same principle, always kept the soldiery and people busy. Even in the provinces, if the troops rested from war, they were constantly occupied, together with the people, in hard labour, as in digging great canals, or in making highways, which for solidity and

* Histoire Critique de la Pauvrete, par M. Maxim. Mem. de Literature, t. 7, an 1717.

stateliness, were the wonders of the world, and their remains continue so to this day. They paved upon deep foundations, which so many ages have not shaken, not only all the roads of Italy, but also those throughout all the provinces of their empire; by which means they established commerce, and the free intercourse of nations, and civilized the western world. Even in the remotest provinces this system was adhered to: we find 7,700 Roman miles paved by them in Spain, and above 2,570 in Britain.*

6. The sin of sloth is committed many ways. The most grievous is perfect sloth in spiritual things, by which a man is sorry for, or conceives a wilful loathing of virtue and divine charity, on account of the labour and difficulty in attaining it. As if a man, on account of the trouble of resisting temptations, should wish that there were no God, or that he himself had been a brute beast without a rational soul, or had never been baptized or known the Christian religion. This belongs to the most grievous of all sins, the hatred of God, and of his grace and charity in us. It is also the sin of spiritual sloth, if a person, out of tepidity, be sorry that he has embraced a state of perfection; or if one fall into despair, lukewarmness, wilful distractions, omission of prayer, or neglect of any spiritual duties. Alas! how slothful does the spirit of the world render us in the service of God. Prayer, the preparation to the sacraments, all spiritual duties often seem tedious to Christians, because they want fervour and courage, by which the saints found those exercises most sweet. The slothful man saith: "There is a lion without; I shall be slain in the streets."—Prov. xxii. 13. "There is a lion in the way, and a lioness in the roads."—Prov. xxvi. 13. He dares not stir to practise virtue, lest he be devoured. What are those lions and lionesses, which he represents to himself in the service of God? They are austerity, labour, holy prayer. The cross of Christ appears a furious lion to the tepid soul; she says, her shoulders are not able to bear it. But the labour of virtue, and the mortification of our passions, are not terrible to true courage and love; these find them sweet. But suppose the paths of virtue everywhere filled with lions; are not those of vice beset with others far more furious? The ambitious, voluptuous, the worldly man suffers longer watchings, undergoes far greater mortifications, and devours more affronts in the service of the devil, than a mortified

* See Bergier, Histoire des grands Chemins de l'Empire Romain.

recluse does for God in his cell. One half of such pains and trouble, suffered for the cause of virtue, would have made them saints, and procured them a crown equal to that of the martyrs.

7. Add to their labour of vice the tumult of restless passions tearing the breast asunder, the remorse of guilt, the anxiety, fears, disappointments, and rage, which possess the soul of the unhappy worldling; and still more, the eternal misery that awaits him after this momentary life. Ah! "they that fear the hoary frost, the snow shall fall upon them."—Job, vi. 16. The prophet Amos says, that "he who flees from the face of a lion shall fall upon a bear; and the slothful man resembles one that leans against a wall, while a serpent issues out of it and bites him."—v. 19. Do but wrestle against this lion of sloth, till you have torn him to pieces, like Sampson, by a vigorous resolution and mortification, and you shall find in him a cake of honey, or a heavenly sweetness, which will encourage you to pursue your journey. Courage will show that the temptation is no more than the shadow and mere fear of an imaginary phantom, which disappears when courageously attacked. Whence David mentions this temptation by the name, not of anything real, but of nocturnal fears.

8. The second sin of sloth is that, by which a man neglects the duties of his calling. It is a strict obligation for every one, that he be very diligent in employing himself in his profession. It is God who hath placed him in it; he must therefore take care never to look upon it as troublesome, painful, or tedious; but must consider it as an exercise given him by God, with a precept that he employ himself faithfully therein, as a necessary means of salvation, and a duty which he owes to God, to himself, and his family, and to the commonwealth of the world. He cannot neglect it without a grievous sin, and an injustice. Idleness is particularly criminal and dangerous in young persons. By it they become for ever incapable of serious application to anything; their souls are overrun with the briars of vices; as land, which is not tilled, brings forth weeds and thorns. Moreover, they neglect the means of rendering themselves afterwards capable of business; and the consequence of their neglect is, that their whole life will be slothful and unprofitable. Especially an idle student loses time and opportunities never to be repaired; and if he afterwards follow a profession, for which he is not qualified, as that of the law or physic, or of serving the Church, he lives in habits of sin, till by study he has qualified himself for those professions, and is bound to restitution for all the injustices and evils of which his ignorance

has been the cause. Such persons, by neglecting their studies, lose the most precious time of their lives, which they can never repair, and neglect to qualify themselves to promote the divine honour according to their station. And what is worst of all, by disobedience and habits of sloth, they lay the foundation not only of an unprofitable and obscure, but also of a vicious life.

9. The sin of idleness is committed, if a man neglect his business, though he apply himself to other occupations. It is one kind of idleness, called indolence, for a man to have no serious employment; but it is another kind of idleness, when one neglects his own business, to run after other employments, merely because he will not bear the labour of his own. Sloth makes everything tedious to a man; he therefore seeks to relieve himself, by changing his employment; but is soon sick of the second, because he has not courage to follow any in earnest. According to the old Roman proverb, the ox under the yoke wishes to carry the saddle, and the horse would fain drag the plough. Every one is bound closely to stick to his profession, unless prudence and a greater virtue direct him to choose another; whatever draws him from attending to it is a dangerous temptation, and must be rejected as such, howsoever it may disguise itself.

10. There is no state or profession privileged with any exemption from this law. The king is but the first servant of the commonwealth. What then shall we say of those, who seem to think amusement and pleasure a privilege of their rank? How many men look upon themselves as if they were created only to enjoy the world, and who spend all their time in frivolous amusements, in idle conversation, in pleasures, or in tedious sloth. Persons called Christians live only for diversion and play. Women, who profess the religion of Jesus Christ, are wholly taken up with their own persons, seem scarcely to have any other occupation than to consult their looking-glass, to study new fashions, to adorn and set off their carcase, scrupulously to pay a hundred superfluous visits, and to exact as many more from others. Yet there are some, who pretend to join this slothful life with devotion and piety. But do riches or quality exempt Christians from the obligations and maxims of the Gospel, from the condition of sinners, from the common sentence passed by God upon all mankind? What does religion pronounce of such persons? They receive only the good things of this world, and live continually drunk with its false pleasures. What then are they to expect but the punishment of the rich glutton in hell? His life is not

represented as otherwise criminal than by sloth and jollities. He was richly clad, he feasted daintily, and he enjoyed his plenty. Is not this, which was his damnation, the very description of thousands in the world?

11. Reason itself points out to us the obligation of labour. God has given us a mind capable of the most excellent improvement. What is the difference between an Indian savage, and a virtuous and learned Roman? The former appears scarcely superior to the apes and baboons of his woods; the latter exerts all the graces and elegance of his noble soul. This infinite difference is the effect of culture. God designed in our creation that we should arrive at the perfection of our nature; for the perfection of his works was certainly his view; yet his providence has rendered us capable of it only by industry, that he might oblige us on this account to assiduous labour in the cultivation of our souls. By this means we improve our memory and understanding, and acquire the treasure of every valuable knowledge. Again, virtue, the greatest excellence of which we could be made capable, is only the fruit of our victories over ourselves and our passions, and lays us under the most indispensable necessity of constant labour and watchfulness. The vigour and health of our bodies are not to be preserved but by daily exercise. The common exigencies of the world, all the circumstances of our private state, and everything about us, point out to us the absolute necessity of applying ourselves to labour. Much more does faith teach us this truth, that being all criminals, we are sentenced to this doom;* and that God has promised heaven only to labour. By this condition, we prove ourselves heirs to the heavenly inheritance: if we plead an exemption, we choose hell for our portion.

12. By labour we are to understand some serious useful employment and exercise of body or mind. If persons have no such occupation, by the necessity of their circumstances, for procuring a livelihood, nor by the state in which Providence has placed them, they are bound to choose one for themselves, which may be suitable to their rank, and may fill their vacant hours. Thus they will shun the crime of idleness with its most pernicious evil consequences; if they do this in a spirit of humility and penance, they will make it a great means of their sanctification, and will escape the anxious tortures of the mind, melancholy, and spleen, and the tedious burthen of sloth, by which a

* "Homo nascitur ad laborem, sicut avis ad volatum."—Job, v. 7.

man is tiresome to himself, and even rest and pleasures become dull and without relish to him. Before the simplicity of the first ages was entirely worn away, and luxury banished its last remains, persons of the highest rank were always occupied. In Homer the queens are always found at their loom, or with the spindle; as Helen weaving the siege of Troy, of which she was the cause. Iliad, l. v. 125, 126. Pope, b. 3, v. 169, 170. Andromache, the wife of Hector, Chryseis, &c., used to be similarly occupied. Among the Romans we find Dictators and Censors hastening from their public employments to steer the plough. Augustus wore no clothes but what were wove by his mother or wife.

13. Recreation is sometimes necessary. The body requires rest, and the mind intervals of relaxation. Apollo did not keep his bow always bent. But every one ought first to have regular hours for his serious and useful occupations both of devotion and labour, and only allow a small portion to recreation. Secondly, he must rise early, and as soon as he is awake. This is an important advice against sloth: "As the door turneth upon its hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed."—Prov. xxvi. 14. A philosopher, finding that the Emperor Vespasian rose very early, from this sign alone judged him worthy to govern the world. Thirdly, it is necessary to be earnest in all we do, never lazy and listless.* Not like the slothful man, whom the Wise Man describes as grieving to turn his hand to his mouth. Prov. xxvi. 15. Fourthly, we must regulate our conversation, that it do not consume idly our precious time; we must shun that which is superfluous, and choose that which is the more serious and profitable; we must allow to it only what charity or necessary relaxation requires.

14. But the most necessary advice is that we set due bounds to and regulate well our recreations; we must avoid those which are dangerous or evil. In the first ages, dice, cards, or games of hazard were not so much as known; or any such pastimes as fatigue the mind instead of relaxing it. Their diversions consisted in bodily and manly exercises. Such as are sedentary may be allowed within just bounds, to prevent occasions of idle words and detraction. But what can be more dull or unworthy of a rational being, than to hang for half a day over a pack of cards, more stupefying than the most abstract studies? What account

* "Esto velox in omnibus operibus tuis."—Eccl. xxxi.

will such a person be able to give of his time at the bar of the Supreme Judge on the last day? nay, what would he have answered at the assizes of an Egyptian or Spartan magistrate? All recreation becomes criminal, if it be made an occupation, or immoderate, or pursued with passion.

15. Games of hazard are unjust, and condemned both by the law of nature and by all positive laws. No man can justly expose to chance what is necessary for his affairs or family, or which, if it be superfluous to them, he ought to give to the poor. Nor can he lawfully win from another what he cannot justly rob himself or the poor of, especially by games of hazard. Hence, gaming is of its own nature unlawful; first, because unjust in itself. Secondly, because it always springs from covetousness. For to seek gain more than recreation even from any lawful play is always unlawful, and a degree of covetousness; much more so by games of hazard, always unjust in themselves, if any considerable sum is risked by them. Thirdly, it is an immediate and violent occasion of many most grievous passions and crimes, as of anger, envy, rage, contumelies, quarrels, loss of time and of fortune, despair, swearing, blasphemy, &c. Aristotle (l. 4, Ethic., c. 1) ranks gamesters with highwaymen and robbers, and says that they are worse in this respect, that they acquire their plunder from friends. St. Bernardin of Sienna (Serm. 33. in Domin. 4) says, that gamesters are worse than thieves, and that he would rather live on the money of public robbers. St. Antoninus (2 part. tit. 1, c. 23) writes still more severely against them, and proves that, even though they should play fairly according to the conventions and laws of the game, they, and all who look on, sin most grievously. The law of nature obliges those that win to restitution, if they have won from persons who could not alienate large sums, such as minors, wives, or men whose losses on such occasions would bring distress on themselves or their families. In these cases not only games of hazard, but also those in which industry and art are predominant, are unjust. Add, the passion of gaming is so violent, that it hurries men into the greatest extremities. Tacitus (l. de Moribus Germanorum) mentions that the ancient Germans were fond of dice to such a degree of extravagance and fury, that, when they had lost everything else, they staked, on the last desperate throw, their own liberties and their bodies. Those who play for immoderate sums at lawful games incur the guilt of gaming. Divines teach that winners are to be exhorted to give their gains to the poor.

DISCOURSE XLVIII.

ON CONVERSATION.

Entering into conversation, it is necessary to arm ourselves against danger, by a firm resolution against our most usual failings in it, and a fervent aspiration to God for his succour, in a true sense of our own weakness, and also by taking a short foresight or consideration before we speak. This is Solomon's precept, when he tells us: "It is a man's part to prepare the soul, but the Lord's to govern the tongue."—Prov. xvi. 1. This stirring up ourselves to such a fear, watchfulness, and circumspection, will restrain within our souls that rash vanity and inconsiderate presumption and folly, with which most persons enter into discourse. The check we have upon our minds will prevent our giving a mad loose to our tongue, and will obtain from God the grace to govern it. This was the practice of the great King David: "I have said, I will watch my ways that I offend not in my tongue. I have set a guard upon my mouth."—Ps. xxxviii. 1. This sentiment of fear is to be often renewed during the discourse; and especially in case of worldly, profane conversation, the mind must be often raised to God by some fervent ejaculations, thus to feed on its own invisible food, as the angel did in Tobias's company on earth, and preserve itself from too great dissipation.

The company of the servants of God is to be principally sought, from whose very silence the heart will always treasure up something, and the understanding receive some new light and improvement. When charity or necessity engages a person in worldly conversation, that of profane, scurrilous, wicked, or idle discourses must be shunned with all possible care, and such discourse modestly and genteelly broken off by a sadness or severity of countenance, expressing a displeasure at it, or by some other topic to be carefully brought forward. Reflections, thoughts, and sentiments are the food of the soul; we must, then, be careful that these be virtuous, just, prudent, and good; for the mind will be such as is the nourishment upon which it feeds; if we suffer it to be puffed up with empty wind, it will, of course, become itself light, airy, empty, profane, and whatever is bad. We are solicitous to nourish our bodies with solid, wholesome meats; how much more ought we to be so for our souls? After

conversation we ought to recollect ourselves a little in the closet of our hearts with God, to recover our dissipated spirits, and to call ourselves to consider in what we have failed, by a moment's general reflection on our discourse, arming ourselves with proper resolutions against the like. Job himself followed this method: "I have spoken one thing, which I wish I had not said, and another to which I shall add no more."—Job, xxxix. 35.

To lay down some general rules for conversation, we must remember the first is that precept, which is in every one's mouth, though so rarely practised, viz., that the tongue do never run before the mind, which the Holy Ghost so often repeats by the mouth of the Wise Man: "Never speak any word rashly."—Eccl. v. 1. "Be not hasty in thy tongue."—Eccl. iv. 34. "The words of prudent men shall be weighed in scales. The heart of fools is in their mouth; and the mouth of the wise is in their heart."—Eccl. xxi. 28, 29. To speak much, and always circumspectly, is a very extraordinary gift: but to speak fast, to jostle, as it were, for the word, and to pour out one's thoughts in a hurry, is sure to be done without consideration. This makes a man vent all he has in his heart, or a great deal which he ought to conceal there. It also makes their meaning and embryos of half-conceived thoughts be covered under such a multiplicity of words as to be unintelligible to others; and what wonder, whilst they do not give themselves time to understand themselves, or to take a review of their thoughts or words?

Alas! did we consider what misfortunes we incur, what perplexities we draw upon ourselves, what proofs of our own vanity and folly we give, how burdensome we make ourselves to others by usurping, as it were, the monopoly of discourse, and how many evils we might spare ourselves, only by being more sparing and reserved in our words, we should never fall into this fault. Were we but to consult that vanity itself, which makes us so talkative, it would suffice to show us our error; for we lose the esteem of men, by the very means by which we court it. We discover to them the detestable vanity and self-conceit of our own hearts; we show our pride in thinking all our thoughts wise, and looking upon our words as oracles, deserving the whole attention of others. What can be more tyrannical or more odious in society? What can more degrade us in the opinion of others? It is not a pedantic parade of reading or of languages; but the justness and precision of what little we say, that will gain the reputation of true learning. Nor is it the multiplicity of words, but the choice

of a few short thoughts and words that will make us appear wise. Even in their silence, men of few words will be supposed to conceal great knowledge on every subject of discourse. Every one will admire their words, and be impatient to hear them open their mouths again, as Job testifies of his own reserved silence in his court: "They expected me as rain, and they opened their mouths as to an evening shower."—Job, xxiv. 23. The talkative fool blunders out all that he knows, and all that he does not know, with many impertinences and mistakes. Modesty particularly forbids young persons, especially of the female sex, to be forward in speaking before their elders or betters; nor should any one answer before he has heard the whole question, or anyways interrupt or break in upon another's discourse, and the like, which rules belong to virtue still more than to good manners. "He who answers before he hears, shows himself a fool, and worthy of confusion."—Prov. xviii. 13. "Do not answer a word before thou hearest; and do not add to speak in the midst of discourse."—Eccl. xx. 6. As we expect attention and respect, so it is just we should show it to others. "Hear silent, and for thy respect thou shalt receive good grace."—Eccl. xxxii. 9. "O young man! scarce speak in thy own cause. If thou shouldst be twice asked, let thy head keep thy answer."—Eccl. xxii. 10, 11.

If we find ourselves seized with an itch of talking, and labour under that distemper of him, who, big with his own thoughts, and impatient to give them vent, said: "Who can hold in a conceived speech?" Job, iv. 20, we then lie under a particular necessity of often mortifying and curbing this passion that we may subdue it; as, *e. g.*, by frequently suppressing what we know, and what even might be well spoken. The humility and self-denial of this practice will be a great sacrifice and victory, and of infinite service to us under real temptations of vices of the tongue. To obtain the gift of governing it, we must also practise frequent recollection and solitude, and on proper occasions imitate the silence of our blessed Redeemer in his passion; as when we are attacked by slanders or contumelies, which God's honour does not oblige us to confute. There are certain places and times of silence, as in the church, in the presence of our superiors, when going to prayer, when retiring to bed, in a spiritual retreat, &c.

St. Gregory the Great observes (Mor. l. 7, c. 17), that, as there is a season for silence, so there are many times for speaking, in

which silence would be criminal. We are bound to speak, when the stopping of some evil, the removing of scandal, the edification of others, and God's honour require it. It is also necessary sometimes to unbend our mind, and give it a respite and breathing from too serious application, to which something of innocent conversation is very conducive. We likewise may owe it, out of charity or civility, to others. But we must be very careful, that it be never dangerous, never too long nor too frequent, nor ever without that extreme circumspection, which the great dangers attending this duty require. "Be ye holy in all conversation."—1 Peter, i. 15. "Let your modesty be known to all men."—Phil. iv. 5.

Visits are an act of charity, if the motive be good. They must not, however, be too frequent, long, or worldly, but sanctified by charity, gravity, modesty, and edifying behaviour. Priests charged with the care of souls ought to visit their flocks. One visit of a pastor will sometimes settle a divided family in perpetual peace, and remedy infinite disorders. He will comfort the afflicted, &c. He will thus learn the necessities of his flock; *e. g.*, that many irregularities prevail; that parents are careless, children disobedient; heads of families harsh to their servants, &c.; that a person who, in his confession, seems an angel, is a lion in his own house. By visits we edify and comfort one another, maintain peace, union, and charity together, and mutually excite to virtue, and awaken in each other the spirit of faith. Hence St. Paul said to the Romans: "For I long to see you, &c."—Rom. i. 11, 12.

Yet visits are sources of great abuses. They must be rare. "Rarus sit egressus in publicum," says St. Jerome, Ep. 22. ad Eustoch. And St. Basil writes to St. Gregory Nazianzen (Ep. 1): "I have renounced city conversations, as the occasions of innumerable evils." A priest must indeed visit those who stand in need of his presence, as Christ did Zacheus. Luc. xix. 5. It is a necessary caution, even for ecclesiastics, to pray before and after visits. See St. Jerome, Ep. 22. ad Eustoch.

Our conduct on these occasions must be suitable to the quality of the company, the time, place, subject, and other circumstances of the conversation, in which an unfeigned humility, charity, and respect for our neighbours will be our only sure guides, as they will teach us every necessary decorum, and guard us from whatever might be offensive to our neighbour, or prejudicial to ourselves.

All formality and preciseness, all stiffness, anything forced or affected, is very opposite to the rules both of virtue or good breeding.

It is said for excuse; such a fault in conversation is but a small one. But the smallest sins are the devil's greatest stratagems. The finer the line is, the more easily and the deeper the hook is swallowed. Again, sins of the tongue are usually habitual; consequently all very great. For, as Plato said: "If the matter be small, still custom is never so."

Affectation is as odious to others as it is painful to the person himself. The good qualities appear by it foreign to him, not his true character, but an artful constraint. It also shows, that he seeks the reputation of possessing them. But he, who publishes his own excellencies, even when real, spoils them by his ridiculous ostentation. A good man will never appear persuaded of his own merit, and will do nothing to convince others of it; the less he seems solicitous that others should see it, the more will every one discover it real. Whatever seems studied will be judged counterfeit, and not sincere. Hence every eminent quality loses its effect and esteem amongst men by affectation. But a man must take care to show nothing studied or affected even in endeavouring to avoid affectation.

A decent freedom is the soul of good conversation. In the time of cheerfulness we must remember always to be cheerful. "Let the heart of those that seek the Lord rejoice."—Ps. civ. 3. By stiffness, moroseness, or sadness we would make ourselves burdensome to others, and perhaps indicate that their company was so to us. It would destroy every good end of conversation, and change it into constraint and torment. An agreeable cheerfulness in discourse is reckoned by the philosophers among the moral virtues, and called by them with Aristotle (l. 4, Eth. c. 14), Eutrapelia. But as, on the one side, it shuns unseasonable moroseness, so, on the other, it commands a Christian gravity and decency, condemning not only profane or loose jests, but also all the facetious turns of wit or raillery, which go beyond the bounds of true gravity, or tend to immoderate mirth or laughter, which is condemned by St. Paul as impertinent scurrility; Eph. v. 4. See St. Jerome and St. Chrysostom (Hom. 17. in Ephes.) upon that passage. Just raillery is sometimes used by the saints. See 3 Kings, xviii. 27. Isa. xiv. 9, 10, 11, 12, &c. But a habit of making a jest of others, though with ever so constant a flow of humour, cannot but always be blameable, as its frequency must

be criminal; nor is it possible that it should not often, nay generally, transgress the bounds of virtue, and trespass both upon charity and justice. The art of true raillery requires, that it be done in so inoffensive a manner as to please even the person himself who is the object of it; it ought to appear in so genteel a manner as to carry with it rather a sort of praise for some commendable quality, and only touch very softly on the defect or fault, which is its subject. The notorious enormity of an offence, and the authority of the person reprehending, may indeed, in some cases, allow a severer sting; but no contempt of any person, though ever so mean, or ever so criminal, can be excusable, or will be pardoned; as every man both has and thinks he has a right not to be made the object of any one's disdain. It is the inviolable rule of conversation never to make any one of the company uneasy. What a barbarous cruelty is it to divert the company at the expense or with the blush of any of those who compose it? And he, who now sports with one man, threatens all the rest in their turns; as every man has his weaknesses.* Who can be cheerful where his least inadvertencies are to be exposed by the art of real or pretended wit to immoderate ridicule and laughter? If we pardon others' imperfections in discourse, we may hope to meet ourselves with the same indulgence. This mutual condescension is the soul of true concord and freedom.

The wretched art of punning, at least as generally managed, falls under the same censure; and the punster most frequently puts a slur upon his own wit, where he pretends the most to set it off. Likewise a perpetual humour of drollery and buffoonery is a thing far beneath the gravity of a Christian, and even of a man, and lets him down below the dignity of a rational creature. Moderate laughter, or rather smiling, is sometimes allowable and decent, but never to excess, which very much empties the heart, and offends against true modesty. Nor ought a man ever to laugh first at his own story, or at all at his own jest.

The opposite vice, no less to be shunned, is a sour temper, that is offended at everything that is pleasant, or that has the appearance of a jest. Charity is pliant to all humours in indifferent things, yet without a deference which is servile, mean, or unjust. We must show to others all respect in addressing modestly our discourse to them, and in never interrupting theirs, but listening to them with every due regard to the quality,

* "Omnibus minatur qui facit uni injuriam."—Hor. l. 1, Sat. 3.

judgment, age, &c., maintaining our own character with suitable dignity and majesty, without demeaning ourselves by any baseness. Nor must any unsettledness in our looks betray the least uneasiness in our minds, or any action transgress a strict modesty. Too great ceremoniousness is very contrary to the freedom of conversation, and even to good manners. Men of that cast make it an art to torture themselves and others.

Fawning or flattery is a pernicious fault, and a base meanness of soul. It is the weakness of many to be delighted with it, as self-conceit makes them think their own praises just. But this can be the effect only of blind pride, and exposes them to the ridicule and scorn even of their very flatterers themselves, and to many great misfortunes both temporal and spiritual, making them enemies to the true knowledge of themselves and their real interest, and the dupes of designing parasites. This is especially the pest of courts. By often hearing their own praises men cannot but begin to think too well of themselves, and look upon commendation as an incense due to all their actions. The most interested and base of mortals, discovering their foibles, make use of it to wriggle themselves into their favour, and to abuse their credulity for the most unjust and iniquitous purposes. To shut out these passions from the heart, and secure himself from such snares, every one, but especially princes and all great men, ought to look upon as an insult all praises given them to their faces. Both their interest and their reputation oblige them to this, as well as religion. The flatterer proclaims their weakness and pride; for he could never presume to approach them except under the cover of these imperfections; and neither modesty nor humility should suffer any one to listen to such adulatory impertinence. Vanity, indeed, might be base enough to be delighted with its own applause, were it not given to its face; but to admit this is for it openly to unmask itself to its own confusion. The Emperor Sigismund, hearing a nobleman flatter him, was not able to contain his passion, but gave him a blow on the face, saying it was the greatest affront he had ever received. "The wounds of a friend are better than the deceitful kiss of an enemy."—Prov. xxvii. 6.

The flatterer is more base and criminal than he who listens to him, and offers him a real insult, by entertaining a very bad opinion of his friend's judgment and modesty; and this even if he think his praises the most just; how much more is he so, if his flatteries are false, or, perhaps, impious; and, if his designs

are interested and selfish, as is commonly the case? And every flatterer will be ordinarily presumed to have such views; for, unless influenced by base principles, he would never transgress the rules of modesty so far as to praise a person to his face, and throw such a temptation before him. Plainness and sincerity are the character of a Christian and of every honest man. A pure compliment and a simple approbation of what is well done are far from falling under the name of flattery.

Nothing shows a greater servility and abjectness of soul; nothing is a greater mark of a disingenuous heart than to flatter. The heathens looked upon this vice as much below the liberty of a free man as beneath the probity of an honest man.

A critical disposition, which delights to carp at or censure others, and can bear no opinions contrary to its own, or approve of no conduct which squares not with its notions, is a daughter of pride, and a capital pest of society. A love of truth must always guard us against the mistakes and errors of others; but the greater part of our knowledge is but probability. Here, especially in matters of small or no consequence, we are to allow others their own judgment and way of thinking, as we desire leave to follow ours. It is an intolerable pride to pretend ours infallible, or to be too confident in it, or to desire to make it a law to others. It is the greatest tyranny to usurp such an unreasonable and imperious jurisdiction over other men's judgments; a thing in which, above all, they are most essentially free, and in which we have no authority over them. How provoking and intolerable also must it be to them, to see themselves highly undervalued in that very quality which is man's chief excellence and pride? Truth, indeed, is ever a most valuable good, and the mutual improvement of our minds in it is one of the main advantages of speech. Mistakes and errors often occur in points the most important, in which even justice and charity oblige us to defend the cause of truth. But, when we are bound to contradict even the most impertinent babblers, at least if they are our superiors or strangers, we must do it in a respectful manner, and, if possible, with so much art, that, whilst we oppose false reasonings with freedom, and do not by complaisance betray the truth, yet we inform and correct the erroneous in so obliging a manner, as to do it without giving the uneasiness, or even showing any direct appearance of a correction. This talent, though it takes its rise from an unfeigned humility and charity of heart, yet requires a nice judgment, prudence, a knowledge of men, and a

discrimination of tempers and persons. The duty of fraternal correction has been considered elsewhere.

An itch to dispute and wrangle in conversation is another still more dangerous daughter of pride, and the source of quarrels and many other evils. "Refrain from contention, and you will diminish sin," says the Holy Ghost.—Eccl. xxviii. 10. And the Apostle: "Avoid foolish and unlearned questions, for they beget strifes."—2 Tim. ii. 23. And again: "Let nothing be done through contention, neither by vainglory; but in humility let each esteem others better than themselves."—Phil. ii. 3. Those who are possessed with a spirit of contradiction must be deeply possessed with a spirit of pride, which makes them trample upon good manners and charity. "Be not contentious, lest all improbity dwell in thee," says Abbot Isaias, Hom. Orat. 8, t. 3, Bibl. 187. Those who are warm or loud in disputes give marks of a haughty, self-opinionated mind, which cannot brook that their sentiments should be contradicted: they drown reason in noise, and, losing the command of their temper, blind their understanding, are precipitate and inconsiderate in their words, throw themselves into much nonsense and blasphemy, give their adversary the greatest advantages over them, and betray their pride and the impotency of their mind. Only a cool, sedate canvassing or discoursing upon matters can be the true way of either searching for or giving any information. But why should the search of truth be mentioned as the end of disputes? It is, indeed, always pretended to be so; but men ordinarily show, both by their manner of commencing, and that in which they carry them on, that it is victory which they propose to themselves, not the truth, and that they love their opinions, not so much because they think them true, as because they are their own. Why, then, do men generally engage in disputes? out of pride, not to seem to give up their point, though, perhaps, of no moment; or to make a vain parade of their talents, though they really only display their folly. "It is an honour to the man, who removes himself from contention; but fools are entangled in contumelies."—Prov. xx. 3.

Nor is the system of disputing ever likely to draw others over to truth or to our opinion. All created good has some mixture of imperfection; and most truths have some sides obscure and open to cavil; thus everything has several sides, on which it may be considered in different lights. Therefore, most topics leave always room for *pro* and *con*. We can seldom hope to

reduce an antagonist so far that he will not still find something to say, though he be puzzled ever so much. As long, therefore, as natural pride opposes his opening his eyes to conviction, so long will he still hold out against it, and refuse to acknowledge himself vanquished. When we enter into a debate, what else do we do than set up a mark for victory? The combatants grow harder to be conquered as the strife grows fiercer, and the more closely either seems pressed, the more eager does he become to defend himself. Thus this method of seeking truth may be styled the art of eternal wrangling. Disputes in the classes are necessary to animate students, enlarge their understanding, and promote learning. But scholars should never enter into them, except previously well guarded against all vanity contention, and other dangers, to which they are too often exposed; and on other occasions, unless some necessity may create such as are of importance, they are to be shunned as pernicious and useless. St. Paul's advice was, even in religious matters, "Contend not in words; for it is to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers."—2 Tim. ii. 14. Should we overpower or confute a man ever so evidently, could we hope to make him a proselyte by raising his pride and every disposition in his heart to oppose conviction? What conquest of the heart was ever made by disgusting it? It must, then, be our inviolable rule to abhor contentiousness, and shun the company of persons who are infected with that evil: secondly, never to contradict or dispute in matters not essential. "Never contend about what does not concern or affect thee."—Eccl. x. 8. Thirdly, it is better to suffer a little, than to endanger charity, or our own or others' peace of mind. "If a man will contend with thee in judgment, and take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him."—Matt. v. 40. Fourthly, under a necessity of defending the truth, let the dispute be managed with so much coolness, temper, politeness, candour, charity, deference, and respect, without the least heat, precipitation, insult, or contempt, that it have not the air of a dispute, and may never distract our own mind and disturb its peace, or ruffle or discompose our adversary, but soothe and gain his heart still more if possible, whilst it convinces and satisfies his understanding; for the one can never be gained, while the other is too vehemently roused. "He who, in conversation, would too vehemently push his opinion, though it be the truth, ought to know that he is seized with the distemper of the devil, which is pride. If it be with his equals that he commits this fault, he may cure

himself by correction; but if he forget himself so far as to commit it against his elders, the evil is incurable by human means. He who is not submissive and obedient in words, will never be so in actions. Such a one labours in vain in virtue, and receives from obedience only his own condemnation."—St. John Climacus, Gr. 4.

Confidence is another daughter of self-conceit; for it is the self-opinionated mind that makes the coxcomb, though its characters are legible in the countenance and exterior actions. It is by this extravagance in overrating himself, that a man becomes forward in business, assuming and peremptory in discourse, positive in everything, and that he thinks himself out of the possibility of mistake. This assurance often meets with applause from the ignorant; but is seen through and despised by men of judgment, and lowers the man in the opinion of society, and still more in the character of virtue. The simplicity of our holy religion commands that our discourse be yea, yea, no, no, without further assurance or asseverations, which can only make the hearers doubt of the candour of the speaker.

It is a part of this faith to deal much in superlatives, or in universal propositions; to make everything a man censures most intolerable, equalling the pride of Lucifer, or the like; and whatever he commends infinitely charming, unparalleled, most heavenly, rapturous, &c. Modesty is very reserved in her expressions, to keep herself within the bounds of strict truth, and naked simplicity. St. Ignatius scarcely ever used superlatives; his discourse was simple and free from all exaggeration. Nor did he assert very positively what he knew with great certainty. Positiveness is an enemy to control, and consequently to granting every one the freedom of discourse. Universal propositions are seldom true. A just logician is very reserved in advancing any, because very few, even in sciences, are true in metaphysical strictness; and he who values his word ought to be sparing and cautious in using any such in common discourse, because in common life few of them are exact, even taken in a moral latitude; and they who easily use them will often go too far.

It is a glaring and odious fault for a man to boast of himself. "Let another praise thee, not thyself; a stranger, and not thy own lips."—Prov. xxvii. 2. Here vanity not only offends God; but man also, and grossly mistakes its aim; for whoever makes himself the trumpeter of his own praises, hereby loses the value even of the greatest actions, and tarnishes his own glory in the eyes of men. He likewise blasts all his virtues before God, and

deprives himself of their fruit. Hence, old Tobias says: "Never suffer pride to reign in thy discourse."—Tob. iv. 14. As we are to be modest and humble in our hearts, so likewise should we be in our words. Hence it is the advice, not only of the saints, but even of the heathen philosophers, that a man should avoid all discourse about himself and his own concerns, as it usually proceeds from and nourishes pride and self-love, and also is tedious and offensive to others, as Pliny observes (B. 1, Ep. 8). "Neither commend nor discommend yourself," was a maxim of Cato. Confucius and Aristotle had laid down the same rule, adding that the first is open vanity, and the second, an excess of humility, always suspected to include a secret vanity; and therefore, both insupportable to the hearers, and indicating folly and presumption. Hence, a man who talks not only of himself, but of what belongs to him, as of his family, ancestors, estates, profession, offends against modesty and good manners; if he speak of them through necessity, let it be modestly, briefly, and avoiding, if possible, the use of the first person, than which nothing can be more fulsome or odious. All egotisms must be banished.

He who any other ways expresses an esteem of himself or of his own words, is justly punished with universal contempt; as if he stun his hearers by the loudness of his voice, or by an assuming tone, or by casting his eyes about on his hearers to observe their applause, which by those gestures he gives first to himself; and as if he said on every word of his: "Oh the fine expression! the wisdom, &c." The hearers read in his countenance and in his accent what he says in his heart, and repay his folly with that disdain which is due to it.

It is likewise a rule of prudence to speak little of others or their concerns; for such conversation is apt to lead to detractions, affronts, and many sins against charity. When any mention of other persons occurs, let this maxim be remembered, that nothing be said of them which one would conceal from them. This must be more strictly observed with regard to superiors, princes, &c. "Detract not the king in the very thought, and speak not ill of the rich in the private chamber; because the birds of heaven will carry thy voice, and he who has wings will tell thy words."—Eccl. x. 20. Be not too lavish even in praising others; it might hurt them, and offend the hearers: men are naturally enemies to it.

The utmost watchfulness over ourselves is necessary, that we never commit to any one whomsoever the least secret concerning others. St. Ambrose testifies, that, though his dear and holy

brother Satyrus had lived in the greatest mutual confidence with him, and all things else were common, yet one thing was always excepted; for they had never trusted one another with the least secret of others. Those, who love to talk much, are easily betrayed into this crime. "The fool is in labour with the word; as the cry of a woman in child-bed to be delivered. As a dart fixed in the thigh," which the man is in continual pain to draw out of that tender part, "so is a word in the heart of a fool."—Eccl. xix. 11. What can be baser than to betray a friend and the confidence he has placed in a man, and to act the part of an enemy against him in requital of his trust? He, to whom it is betrayed, will be the first to detect and insult his perfidiousness, as the Wise Man remarks; Prov. xxv. 9. One such light word is sure to draw after it much bitterness, fruitless anxiety, guilty fear, enmity, disgrace, and fruitless repentance.

Though holy conversation on heavenly things is to be sought on all proper occasions, yet it is not to be introduced at unseasonable times, or in company where it will appear tedious, or dull, or be not received with due attention; for this can only serve to make piety disagreeable, and to be burthensome to others. Nor are such subjects ever to be mentioned, without that high respect which is due to them. Hence St. Gregory Nazianzen, in his Precepts to Virgins, says: "Women must not presume to speak much on the Trinity, or other divine mysteries, but hear more."

DISCOURSE XLIX.

ON DETRACTION.

1. Detraction is an unjust and secret taking away or diminution of the reputation of another. It is committed not only by taking away our neighbour's good name, as by laying some crime to his charge; but also by unjustly diminishing it, as by denying or depreciating his virtue or good qualities; by silence, which may be interpreted a denying or an extenuation of them; or by praising them coldly, by which others will conceive them not to be worthy of praise; for it is generally worse to commend another coldly than openly to condemn him, as Phavorinus the Grecian philosopher used to say. Whispering is a detraction, which tends to sow discord between persons, or to create hatred and ill-will. It is a

more grievous sin than simple detraction; as friendship is a good of a distinct order. "The whisperer and the double-tongued is accursed."—Eccl. xxvii. "The Lord is said to hate him, who sows discord among brethren."—Prov. vi. Slander or calumny is an imputation of a false charge or crime. Hence detraction or slander differs only by the circumstance, that in the former the charge or blemish is true, in the latter false. To detract or slander others by public libels, or news, or histories, is a more grievous injustice. Even the dead live by their good name; and it is looked upon as more impious, and was called by the heathens sacrilegious, to injure the ashes of the dead. The truth of history allows only those crimes to be published to posterity, that are now public and certain, or which the public good requires to be made known.

2. In the definition of detraction the word unjust is added; because this crime is not committed where there is no injustice, as where our own or others' necessary defence requires that we divulge the crime of another; or where the crime is already public. A person, who has been convicted and condemned in a public court of judicature has lost his right to his reputation as to that fact.* Also, if any disgrace or crime of a person be already known to so many, that morally speaking it will certainly be divulged over the whole community, and may be already esteemed public and notorious, so that it cannot by any excuse be concealed or wiped off; as if it be already known at many houses in a neighbourhood; in this case the person has lost reputation in that place, whence it is no injury to tell it to one who had not yet heard of it. But he would sin against charity, who would be often repeating it, because no one would think such a treatment charitable in his own case. It would be a mortal sin even once to mention it out of hatred or revenge; and it would be an unjust detraction to mention it in a distant country, where it is not public.

It is also just to disclose another's crime, when this is necessary for our own or others' justification, or to preserve ourselves or others from some considerable danger or prejudice, or to ask advice, or to correct a sinner. But for the purpose of fraternal correction it is never lawful to tell parents or superiors, if a private admonition will suffice. The order of charity is to be observed according to the law of nature, as delivered by our blessed Redeemer: "Go and reprove him between thee and him alone. If he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more;

as a parent, a pastor, a master, or a friend; if he will not hear them, tell the Church."—Matt. xviii. 15, 16. But it is not lawful to inform any one person more than necessity absolutely requires, even for advice or correction. So strict is this obligation, that St. Thomas says the patriarch Joseph would have sinned in accusing his brothers to his father, if he had not first privately admonished them, though it should be evidently seen by certain circumstances, that such an admonition would be in vain.

Charity may sometimes oblige us to disclose the faults of another, to secure an innocent neighbour from some grievous danger; as, for example, to tell him that such a servant or friend is a thief; that he cannot safely trust his life or fortune in the hands of such a one; that a certain beggar is a cheat. Thus St. Paul admonished Timothy: "Alexander, the copper-smith, hath done me much evil; whom do thou also avoid."—2 Tim. iv. 14.

3. Detraction is a mortal sin, when committed in a matter of weight; as, *e. g.*, relative to any considerable blemish, whether natural or moral; in birth, fortune, or manners; or by stating that a person is guilty of some grievous sin, unskilful in his business, or the like. An imputation of some mortal sin, as of swearing rashly, or of drunkenness, spoken of a man who, by frequently committing it publicly, shows that he boasts of it, or at least does not care who knows it, is not a grievous detraction in such circumstances; but, on the other hand, in regard of a person of eminent sanctity, the charge of a wilful, though venial sin, may be a matter of weight.

4. To discover the nature of detraction, and to conceive some idea of its enormity, we must consider its malice, its baseness, and its most pernicious consequences. It directly attacks and destroys the two cardinal virtues, which are the bands and link of society, justice and charity. It violates justice, because it robs our neighbour of his good name, the most valuable of all external goods which a man can possess. "A good name is better than much riches."—Prov. xxii. "Have care of thy good name; for this will remain to thee more than many great and precious treasures."—Eccles. xli. 15. Our civil life, and all the advantages of society, depend upon it. These are so important to man, who is formed to live in society, and is linked with, and depends upon, the commerce and services of others in all his affairs and duties, that sometimes it is more dear, more valuable, and precious to him than even his natural life, which it survives; for a man lives by it after his death. St. Thomas teaches (2æ. q. 73. a. 3,)

that detraction is a sin less enormous in itself than murder; but more grievous than theft; because among external goods reputation excels riches, and comes nearer to spiritual goods. We read in the canon law: "He who bereaves his brother of his corporal life, and he who hates him, and he who detracts him, are all murderers.—"De Pœnit. 1. cap. Homicidiorum. Can we make it our diversion to rob our neighbour of the most precious of all temporal goods which he can possess, and murder his reputation for our amusement.

5. Charity, the queen of all virtues, is no less injured by this vice than justice. The love of our neighbour is grounded on our love of God himself. It is for his sake that we are bound to love one another. We are to contemplate his image in every brother, and the motives of his divine charity. All these we injure by detraction. He is a member of Christ, against whom we throw our dart; and a member of whom he has said: "Whatever you shall do to one of these little ones, you shall do to me." No wonder that detractors are declared hateful to God.—Prov. vi. 19. We are bound by the law of charity to follow the same rule towards our neighbour, which we desire that he should follow towards us. But how opposite here is our conduct? We are most tender in everything, in which our honour is interested, and find the least wound in this part extremely sensible; yet we make it a diversion to murder him in his reputation. The prophet Jeremiah complained, that his enemies, in their implacable rage, armed themselves against him, saying: "Let us kill him with our tongues" (Jer. xviii.); let us cast ourselves upon him as a prey prepared for us; let us tear him to pieces with the general instrument of our malice, our tongues; by invectives and calumnies. The apostle speaking of this vice says: "If you bite and devour one another, take heed that you be not consumed by one another."—Gal. v. 15. We devour our neighbour, when we tear his good name with our tongues.

Moreover, "in other sins, as in impurity, a man only kills himself; but he who detracts, murders also his hearers," as St. Jerome says in Ps. 100, p. 387, t. 2. St. Chrysostom observes, that the detractor wounds many at one stroke by one word; he gives a mortal stab to his own soul by his sin; likewise to the souls of as many as listen to him, or propagate it again; or among whom quarrels or suspicions will be raised by it, or scandals given; he likewise wounds the common state of the Church by these evils, besides the bitterness, uneasiness, and loss of reputation, which

he causes in all its members. Hom. 3. ad Pop. Antioch, n. 5, t. 2, p. 42.

6. Also the manner in which he inflicts these wounds carries along with it a particular baseness and treachery. Even abstracting from motives of grace and Christianity, if we have any principle of honour, we avoid whatever has a character of baseness, and can draw on us hatred and contempt. For even natural pride makes us sensible of honour. Now detraction is a vice so base, that nothing can efface its meanness. For, to begin with the person, he whom we detract is either an enemy, or a friend, or a person indifferent to us. If he be an enemy, every one will justly think that we speak out of passion; and that, if this man were in our interest, we should not condemn him. Thus, whether they believe us or not, they will at least conceive a contempt of us, and pity our weakness. If he be a friend, what a baseness is it to betray the laws of friendship, to set upon him whose protector we ought to be; to expose him to contempt, from whom we have received favours and kindnesses, who, perhaps, this moment is serving and defending us; to outrage him on one side, whom we flatter and entertain with fine speeches to his face? Is it possible, that men should suffer themselves to be carried to such a pitch of insincerity? But perhaps the person is one indifferent to us. Is it not then a baseness to spit your venom upon him? to injure him, from whom you never received any harm? Nor does detraction attack others by means which become persons of honour, but by the tongue: "Whose teeth are weapon and arrows; and their tongue a sharp sword."—Ps. lvi. 5. The devil in the disguise of a serpent attacked our first parents in paradise with this instrument; by which "he was a murderer from the beginning."—John, viii. This is the weapon of the detractor. And what is the time which he chooses to give the stroke? When the person is most out of a condition to defend himself. For the calumniator attacks him not to his face; he is very circumspect in his iniquity; he uses great precaution. As long as the person is present, or any friend that will defend him, not a word is spoken against him. But when no one is by to undertake his cause, then we detract boldly. Is not this the most base and dastardly impudence? Men of false worldly honour, who trample upon all laws divine and human to revenge an affront received, rather than bear it with Christian meekness and patience, still scorn basely to assault their enemy behind his back, or in any base, ungenerous way; they have a horror at treachery or cowardice in their crime;

an assassination is a baseness of soul, a stain which nothing could ever wipe off; yet this is the conduct of the detractor. On this account the Holy Ghost compares detractors to serpents biting without making a noise. "If a serpent bite in silence, he is nothing better that backbiteth secretly."—Eccles. x. 11. Men, in detracting, often demand secrecy of those to whom they speak. Is not this to condemn, and to render themselves contemptible? Is not this to confess their own injustice, and to say: Be you more charitable and more prudent than I am. Do not imitate my example.

7. This is not all. Men study by various arts to instil the poison of their detraction, by which they render it the more fatal. The studied equivocations in which they wrap it up, the artifices and wiles which they employ, make it more insinuating and more agreeable. "His words are smoother than oil, and the same are darts."—Ps. liv. 22. "You will see them," says St. Bernard (Serm. 24. in Cant.), "fetch deep sighs before they speak, assume an air of charity, express by their accent and by their words a tenderness and compassion, only for fear they should seem to detract out of malice. I am exceedingly sorry for him, they will say, because I love the man; but I never could correct him of this or that fault. Or, he has many good qualities; but we are obliged to speak the truth; in this he is not to be excused. Or, this should never have been published by me; but as it is already known, I may tell it to you." Thus does iniquity lie to itself, says that saint. But what is the effect of these restrictions and excuses, of these reflections full of cruel compassion, of the cast of the eye, or tone of the voice, which speak, without saying anything, and which say more than words can? Instead of palliating the malice of the heart, they make it more dangerous; because they make it appear more sincere, and more agreeable. If it were too impudent, no one would listen to it; if it showed itself in its naked colours, others would have an horror at its sight; but under these borrowed disguises even lies pass for truth, and the most unjust detractions are listened to and greedily swallowed down. Many allege pretexts of zeal and of the glory of God, and thus find a means of consecrating detractions under the name of virtue. It is for the good of the Church, for the sake of true piety, say they, that we are obliged to discover what sort of a man such a one is. Thus by a pretended direction of their intention they sanctify every rash judgment, every suspicion, every calumny. But God, who sees their hearts, discerns all the malice which is there harboured. Nothing less than his service, than his glory is their

motive. If it were, their conduct would be very opposite. They would mention these faults only to those who might remedy them; not publish them before persons who are scandalized at them. "Thy mouth hath abounded with evil; and thy tongue hath artfully framed deceits."—Ps. xlix. 19. Some are so wilfully blind as to call it an excuse of their malice, because they tell their detraction only to one person, or because what they say is true. To blacken the reputation of another before one person is a grievous detraction. Moreover, will not this person have also his confidant, to whom, notwithstanding his promise, he will tell it again; and in this he will only do as we have done, and imitate our example. Experience shows that, under the whisper of a secret, a detraction is soon carried over a whole neighbourhood, and made public.

As to the second pretext—that it is only the truth; this constitutes detraction. If it were false, it would be also slander. Moreover, how do we know it to be truth? We shall find ourselves often mistaken, even when we pretend to be the best informed. The greater part of detractions, even in their rise, are founded on rash judgments, suspicions, and falsehoods, at least in part. And what has passed through the mouths of others is never heard again without some alterations and additions. Fame is continually adding something to reports; and in detraction, slanders are much more frequent than is commonly imagined.

8. The dreadful consequences of this vice make it still more odious and detestable; as, first, a coldness between friends, open enemies, dissensions, and the disturbance of the peace sometimes of a whole neighbourhood. Perhaps, whole ages will not be sufficient to close the wounds which one word has made. After a thousand reconciliations the sore may still remain open. These are the daily known dire effects of detraction. Moreover, what frettings, what pains, what anxieties do individuals hence suffer? "A man full of tongue is terrible in his city; and he that is rash in his word is hateful."—Eccles. ix. 25. The detractor is terrible in his family, in his city, in his whole country. He carries desolation wherever he goes; he wounds the souls of all with whom he converses; he destroys the peace of families, and disturbs the tranquillity of the commonwealth. If he backbite a magistrate, a pastor, or superior, he ruins his authority, destroys the public order, and fills the State with confusion. Let those remember this, who continually censure parents, magistrates, or superiors. "The prince of thy people do not curse."—Exod. xxii. 28. Mary

was struck with a leprosy for having spoken against her brother, Moses.—Num. xxii. 10.

9. The difficulty of doing sincere penance for this sin is another circumstance, which ought to make every one tremble at its very name. The reason is, because all injustice obliges to restitution; but, above all other kinds of injustice, detraction brings the most terrible obligations of this nature. First, because the reparation of honour and reputation is, of all others, the most tender and most important. Secondly, because this admits the least excuses of all others. Thirdly, because it extends itself to consequences, which are endless. To restore the good name of your neighbour is a point of the greatest difficulty, yet indispensable in this case. Whence that great director of souls, Lewis of Granada, said, that he trembled when he heard a penitent name detraction, above all sins. If a man has taken away the goods of another, he would condemn himself to restitution, yet his goods are far less than his honour. And if we have injured another in his fortune, we can compute, and make an estimate of his loss; but not in the ruin of his reputation; we know not where or when his losses here will end. We, indeed, have gained nothing by it ourselves, which is the extravagance of this sin. A thief, who takes our purse, enriches himself by it; not he who robs another of his reputation; yet he makes him poor indeed.

> "Who steals my purse, steals trash;
> 'Twas mine; 'tis his; and has been slave to thousands:
> But he who filches from me my good name,
> Robs me of that, which not enriches him,
> Yet makes me poor indeed." SHAKSPEARE.

And nothing can excuse the obligation of repairing the unjust prejudices excited against him. No authority on earth can dispense from it. All the jurisdiction which Christ has left in his Church cannot exempt you. Though it cost you your honour, it must be done. Restitution of goods unjustly taken must be made to the prejudice of your own fortune; so in this case, though it cost you your own honour. This is mortifying and difficult; yet it must be. It is a debt you have contracted; you owe your honour to those whom you have injured; and the order of God requires this sacrifice. In case of calumny you are obliged to confess publicly, that you slandered your innocent neighbour; but in detraction what will you do? The crime divulged by you

is true; this you cannot deny. Restitution here will generally be impossible, yet must be attempted as much as possible by all the means in your power. You are a debtor as long as you live. You will say, that you spoke only one word, innocently and without malice; that you told it as a secret; that you spoke what you had heard from another. But nothing of these excuses can exempt you from the guilt of your crime, or from the obligation of restitution. Add, that the consequences of your detraction are almost endless. A word often ruins another's fortune, protection, friend, marriage, business, and success in the world; creates discords, enmities, troubles, and intestine wars. A person who was asked about the credit of a certain merchant, answered only by shrugging up his shoulders, and this dumb sign ruined a man worth ten thousand pounds. All these evils are to be repaired. The hearers and all others, who have been drawn into sin by your scandal, are to be converted to God by your admonitions to repentance, if possible, or the loss of their souls will be laid to your charge. Oh! how difficult a task is this restitution! But, O still more dreadful truth! how little is it practised, how little is it heard or thought of among Christians! It is then true, that few do sincere penance for this sin. It is then true, that innumerable Christian souls, it is to be feared much the greater part, are damned in part for this crime. For it is more certain, that detraction is the most common of all crimes. Ambition, avarice, impurity, and other sins attack only certain persons; but who is he, that will be found to have lived totally free from detraction? Even those who have embraced a more severe practice of virtue, often fall a prey to it. Yet this sin excludes from the kingdom of heaven, as the Apostle assures us. Nay, detraction is named in every black list of sins mentioned by him. Rom. i. 30. 2 Cor. xii. 20. Whence St. Bernard cried out to his religious: "Unless we refrain from this sin, it is in vain that we mortify our bodies the whole day. All our painful exercises of penance will not avail us. Could we not have found a more easy and a more supportable way to hell?" As St. Chrysostom said to his people: "We know that, though we fast on bread and ashes, we shall reap no profit from our austerities, unless we shun detraction."—Hom. 9. ad Pop. Antioch., n. 6, t. 2, p. 44. Satisfaction is also to be made for contumely, which is an opprobrious word spoken to a man's face. This dishonours him, and obliges him to a reparation by asking his pardon publicly, or by some like means.

10. We must examine and shun the sources of this vice. The first is idleness, as St. Paul mentions (1 Tim. v. 11, 12, 13; 2 Thess. iii. 11). "Sitting thou spokest against thy neighbour."—Ps. xlix. 11. A second cause is vanity and a desire to please others. Men detract to divert others and keep up conversation. How shall a man succeed in this? Shall he talk of indifferent things? these will interest no one. Shall he praise the virtues of his neighbours? this would be to become dull and tedious. Shall he speak of devotions? no man will hear him. Detraction is the amusement of idle minds, the topic which makes conversation agreeable, and raises the attention of every one. Passions make all men both speak it and hear it with pleasure. For thirdly, the great sources of this sin are pride and envy. Saul spoke against David, because he had more friends than himself; Core against Aaron, because he was vested with the priesthood. By pride we conceive an inordinate esteem of ourselves: hence we despise others. Without this perverse disposition we should find no pleasure in ripping up the faults of others. But we think their praises detract from our merit, and that what is taken from others is given to us. Lastly, antipathies and hatred produce detractions. Through their false glasses we can discern nothing but faults in those against whom we entertain these prejudices.

To avoid detraction, we must ground our souls in sincere charity and humility. If we love our neighbours, we shall palliate and excuse their faults; and hear them mentioned with pain, not with pleasure. Their merit and praises will be our joy. If by humility we have our own faults always before our own eyes, we shall never speak or willingly hear those of others. St. Basil (Regul. Brevior., Regula 289) orders one, who has been guilty of detraction, to be cured by exercises of humility in the meanest employments; and (Reg. 26) that the detractor, and he who listened to him, be both banished from the company of the brethren for some time. Against this vice every one must learn to govern and refrain his tongue. A word once let slip is not to be recalled. And we must always observe this rule, when we speak of our neighbours, to say nothing but what we would say if they themselves were present, unless charity requires it; and in this case sincerely to ask our own hearts, before we speak, whether in the same circumstances we should be willing, that others should speak of us in the same manner. Gerson, Resp. ad 4 Quæstiones, t. 2, p. 465.

If others have spoken ill of us, we must overcome it by patience

and meekness, remembering that Christ was calumniated for our sakes, and has pronounced us happy if we share in this cross. Secondly, that this humiliation is the cure of our pride, our satisfaction for sin, part of our penance, and the great means of our perfection.

11. In detraction the hearer often sins as grievously as he who detracts, and is no less bound to restitution, nay more, if, by encouraging, assisting, or flattering the detractor, he is the chief cause of the evil discourse. Whence St. Thomas says, 2, 2æ. q. 73, a. 4: "He sins no less than the detractor; sometimes more." And St. Bernard: "Whether of the two be more damnable, to detract, or to hear the detractor, I cannot easily say."

He who hears a detraction with pleasure, though he noways encourage it by his looks or otherwise; and he who did not hinder the detraction, when it was in his power to do so; are guilty of a mortal sin against charity. Not only they who do evil, but they who consent to it, are worthy of death. Rom. i. A superior is always bound to correct an inferior, who detracts in his presence; so is every one with regard to his neighbour, unless so much his superior that it could not be attempted, or unless he justly fears that it will only exasperate, or that it will draw some considerable prejudice upon himself; or if he be scrupulous, and only doubts whether what is said be detraction. In these cases he is obliged noways to concur in the sin by listening, smiling, answering, or the like. If it can be done, he ought to rise and leave the company; if this would be an affront, and he cannot turn the discourse to some other subject, or defend the absent person, he must at least, by the gravity and sadness of his looks, testify his displeasure. "The north wind driveth away rain; so doth a sad countenance a backbiting tongue."—Prov. xxv. 23.

12. St. Paulinus, in his Epistle to Calentia (inter Ep. St. Hieron. ultima, t. 4, p. 816), after complaining how universally this vice reigns, says very justly: "Happy is he, who hath so armed himself against this vice, that no one dares to detract another before him." If we were so diligent, as never to believe or listen to detractors, all men would be afraid to backbite, lest they should render themselves contemptible, not others. But this evil is general, and many are addicted to it, because almost all men hear it with pleasure. St. Chrysostom writes: "When you hear any one backbite, say: If you have any one to praise, I will willingly hear you; this will give me pleasure and edification. But what shall I gain by learning that a person is wicked? This will be a

grief and a loss. Speak to him, entreat him, show your charity to him; thus endeavour to gain him to God. This is the part of one who desires to heal his wounds. Let us consider our own sins, and the account we must give to God for ourselves, and drop this perverse curiosity in others' affairs. What insolence would it be to search every corner of your neighbour's house? If whisperers once learn by experience, that by detracting they make us detest them, not those whom they speak against, they will correct their criminal custom, and will afterwards thank us as the authors of their salvation."

13. One would think, that a vice so heinous in itself, so terrible in its consequences, both spiritual and temporal, so dangerous to our salvation, and so hateful both to God and man, should scarcely be found among men. One would think, that all men would conspire together to declare war against this pest of society; for every one is personally interested in it. He who detracts one, threatens every body. When you hear one detract an absent person, think it will be your turn to be absent to-morrow, and that then he will perhaps make you the subject of his raillery and of the diversion of the company. Undertake now the defence of an injured brother, who is not present to justify himself, as you would wish to find a zealous advocate in the same circumstances. "God hath given a charge to every one of his neighbour."—Eccl. xvii. "Let the detractor bear the mark of his own confusion, and be the mark of his own confusion, and be the abhorrence of all mankind." "The detractor is the abomination of all mankind."—Prov. xxiv. Imitate the zeal of holy David, who attests that he found himself filled with indignation, if he happened to hear any one secretly backbiting his neighbour, and that he thought it his duty to persecute and confound him. Ps. c.* If we make charity the rule of our lives, we shall shun the snares of the devil, and shall obtain much grace and eternal glory. "Many have fallen by the edge of the sword; but not so many as have perished by their own tongue."—Eccl. xxviii. 22.

* Detrahentem secreto proximo suo hunc persequebar.

DISCOURSE I.

ON ANGER.

1. ANGER is a desire of revenge. Four violent appetites in the soul of man form as many violent passions: the desire of honour and greatness, the desire of riches, the desire of sensual pleasure, and the desire of revenge. Some have thought the kind which comprehends lust and gluttony the most vehement, on account of the great difficulty in overcoming it, when once grown to a habit; but it is generally agreed, that anger is the most impetuous, and it sometimes degenerates into fury and even frenzy; whence it is absolutely called passion, because the most violent among all the distempers of the mind. The irascible faculty is engrafted by God in man, to give him an ardour to destroy vice, and to defend him against evil. And not to resist and chastise vice with a suitable zeal and vigour is a criminal remissness and indolence of soul. Hence there is a certain holy zeal, which may be called a just and virtuous anger. Such was that of Phineas. And Heli was condemned, because he had not this holy anger against his wicked children. Of this anger many understand that verse (Ps. iv.), "Be angry and do not sin:" though it be explained by several commentators of the indignation with which a penitent arms himself against his own sins. But it is much more easy not to be angry at all, than to be angry without sinning in it, as St. Francis of Sales take notice; for something inordinate, and exciting disturbance, will almost necessarily creep into the desire of revenge, at least as to the manner.

2. Anger may be inordinate in the excess of the revenge, which is desired, or in the manner in which it is desired, as if with immoderate vehemence, or with violent agitation of mind or body. It is against the law of nature; because it neither observes the bounds of justice, nor of charity, nor of reason. If the revenge itself be unjust or excessive, the sin is usually mortal; if the manner only be inordinate, it is most frequently only venial, unless the fury and rage of the mind were extreme, or the exterior contortions very extravagant and indecent. Though the revenge were just in itself, it would still be a grievous sin, if the motive of this desire were not the love of justice, but hatred or the passion of revenge. The law of nature forbids any man to be angry in his own cause; for it forbids him

to be a judge in it, on account of the bias under which he lies in his own favour. Holy Scripture reckons anger among the deadly sins. St. Paul names it among the works of the flesh, which exclude us from the kingdom of heaven. Gal. v. 29. "He who is angry with his brother, is liable to judgment; and he who says to him Raca," a word of contempt, "is guilty before the council, and he who shall call him Fool, is guilty of hell-fire."—Matt. v. 22. "Anger kills the fool."—Job, v. 2. God says: "Revenge belongs to me, and I will render in the season."—Deut. xxxii. "Rendering to no man evil for evil."—Rom. xii.

3. It is a capital sin, because the source and mother of many other grievous sins. St. Gregory in his Morals, and St. Thomas, mention these principal ones. First, indignation, by which a person in his heat despises another, and judges him beneath himself. This is a mortal sin when perfect; for such a contempt of a brother is a mortal sin, and a grievous pride.

Second, swelling of the mind, which is an interior tumour of the mind, big with the desire of revenge.

Third, brawling, or confused clamorous words of passion.

Fourth, quarrelling, or a disagreement proceeding to blows or other actions.

We add, malice and hatred.

Sullenness, or a silence of malice, or contempt, to provoke the adversary.

We must add oaths, curses, detractions, rancour, rash judgments, slanders, &c., which frequently are produced by anger; and, with the great men of the earth, wars, oppressions, and all manner of evils and injustices.

4. Anger hurts ourselves and our neighbour, and highly displeases God; for it destroys both justice and charity in our souls; it disturbs his Holy Spirit abiding in us, and fills our breast, which he makes his dwelling, with disorder and horror, nay banishes him thence. For his place or abode is in peace; and his spirit rests in the humble and peaceable. This vice effaces the image in the soul, which consists in meekness. What should we say of one who should break down the crucifix in a church, and set up an idol of the devil in its place? Anger raises itself up against the Almighty, and usurps his right and authority, who cries out: "Revenge belongs to me, and I will render what is due."—Rom. xii. The angry man will not wait for the justice of God, and leave his cause to him, but will be himself judge in his own cause, and pretends to do justice to himself,

without authority, and against the order established by the sovereign Lord. We read in the lives of the Fathers, that the abbot Philosius, seeing one angry, began to pray thus: "O God! it is no longer necessary that you should be solicitous for us, since one here thinks we can and may revenge ourselves." At which reflection the other entered into himself, and repented with bitter contrition.

5. Anger particularly pleases the devil, whose character is malice, and who is especially delighted with malice and hurting others; anger is an imitation of him in this his infernal temper. Charity seeks the good of all; this vice is the reverse, and studies the prejudice of others. Hence, the name of malice is given to it, because evil is its delight and wish. Moreover, this passion blinds the man, and plunges him headlong into extravagancies and crimes. Nothing can be more pleasing to the devil than this miserable state of blindness, which destroys all seeds of good, and hurries into evil without consideration or fear. Nay, by anger the devil gains an entire command in a soul, and by it drags her where he pleases. A horse, that has lost his eyes, can be led everywhere; and a beast follows the direction of its rider. The soul, which is carried away with anger, is both blind and has the devil for its ruler, and as it were rider.

6. Anger hurts our neighbour, often destroying the souls of many others, by provoking them to quarrels, passion, and all the pernicious effects of this fury both in mind and body. Like a furious dog, it bites others, and so provokes them to bite in their turn. It spreads its scandal and mortal influence over whole families, or even cities; spares not wife, children, or others. The nearest and dearest friends generally suffer first and most from it. The angry man also destroys their temporal happiness, disturbing the whole house, banishing from all his friends peace of mind, the greatest of temporal blessings, and filling them with uneasiness and frights, and making himself terrible to them. "It is better to meet a she-bear, that has lost her whelps, than a fool confident in his folly."—Prov. xviii. "A passionate man raises quarrels; but he who is patient appeases those that are raised."—Prov. xv. His very wife and children dread his presence. "He is a lion in his house. Who can bear the violence of a provoked mind?"—Eccl. xxii. Whence, the Wise Man advises: "Be not linked in friendship with the passionate man."—Prov. xxii. He is like a serpent breathing fire, devouring those who approach him. Every one is afraid to speak or to move a hand before him.

7. Anger, above all, hurts the person whose breast harbours it. It wounds his soul, and expels thence the Holy Ghost, the God of peace and love. It confounds reason, darkens and disturbs the mind, and makes him incapable of business as a rational creature. He, who is patient, is master of his own soul, of his words, and of his actions. But, the impatient man says and does many things, of which he soon repents, and which he would wish to recall. "He, who is impatient, will suffer loss, Prov. xix.; the loss of his soul, the loss of the graces and spiritual advantages, which he would have gained by patience, the loss of friends, whom he has provoked, the loss of his own happiness, and of his peace and tranquillity of mind, the loss of his reputation; for all the world hates and condemns his anger, how just soever his cause may be; a loss generally in his temporal concerns, which are usually injured, and never promoted by anger. What advantage does an angry man give his adversary over him by his words, or extravagant actions? Politicians know that, if they can provoke an antagonist, they will easily defeat him; for he will dig a pit for himself. The exterior behaviour of men in passion is so brutish and unbecoming, that this alone ought to make us abhor this vice. It is still more frightful in persons placed in a conspicuous rank.

8. Nor can anger produce any good. It is not a means to correct sinners. If it restrain their hand, it will never amend, but exasperate their heart. "The anger of man works not the righteousness of God."—James, i. 20. One sin is never a means to amend or correct another. It can never deserve the benediction of God, whom it offends; nor will it convert the neighbour, whom it scandalizes. A child, on seeing his parent correct him in anger, attributes the correction itself to anger, not to justice, and so receives no benefit from it; on the contrary, he learns by this sin of his parent to despise sin, and more easily to offend God.

9. Anger implies an excess of folly; for the angry man seeks to heal his own wound by wounding another. "He seeks revenge," says St. Austin, "as if the punishment of another could avail him. He seeks a remedy from the suffering of another, and torments himself." Nay, what is much more extravagant, he murders his own spiritual soul to revenge himself on another, because he thinks himself injured by him. Again, what a madness would it be, if a man destroyed his only resource out of revenge against another? Yet he, who is angry, shuts the mercy of God against himself, by which alone he can be saved. Boetius

shows (l. de Cons. Philos.) that no wise man can ever be angry at another; for, if the other be just and innocent, this would be most impious; if the other be wicked, he deserves our compassion, not our rage, in the same manner as the corporal distempers of others move us to pity. At least, as Seneca says: "It is ridiculous to lose your own innocence for the sake of one who is guilty." If another be blind, ought we not to pity his state? Cures are to be the contraries to the distemper. We must cure another's hatred by love, not by returning hatred; by patience, not by revenge. He, who offered the injury, has set a precious stone in our heavenly crown, if we bear it patiently. True greatness of soul, courage, and virtue consist in commanding ourselves. Anger is a baseness of soul. "Anger rests in the breast of the fool."—Eccles. v. ii. "Let not anger conquer you."—Job, xvi.

10. The remedies against the anger of others are, first, mild words. "A soft answer extinguishes anger."—Prov. xv. In the lives of the Fathers of the Desert we read, that a young monk meeting a priest of the idols approached him, and the priest in fury beat him. St. Macarius soon after met the same priest, and saluted him with sweetness and respect, which gained at once the idolater, who cried out: "This is a true servant of God." He was immediately converted to the faith, and became a hermit. See the effects of harsh words on one side, and of mild on the other. When the insolence of Nabal to David had provoked him to vow his destruction, the meekness and courtesy of Abigail appeased his choler. A certain young nobleman came with his dogs and a troop of insolent servants, under the windows of the chamber of St. Francis of Sales, and vented his rage against that holy prelate by the most outrageous noise and language, which he repeated with the greatest insolence to his face several times. The saint heard all his most impudent and unjust contumelies with an invincible sweetness and patience. One afterwards asked him how he could have kept his peace. He answered: "My heart and tongue have long made an inviolable bargain together, that if my heart felt any emotion or inclination to anger, my tongue should keep the strictest silence. And what could I have said or done to appease his choler better than by silence?" This saint, by his astonishing meekness, won the hearts of all men, and overcame the most obstinate. This must be a silence of charity and mildness, not of contempt or sullenness, which would exasperate the more.

Meek silence, such as now mentioned, is the second remedy against the anger of others. "When wood fails the fire will go out."—Prov. xxvi. "Do not dispute with the contentious man, and do not build wood upon his fire."—Prov. viii. During his passion a man is incapable of reason; when he is calm, we may prevail with him. "Not defending yourselves, but give way to anger."—Rom. xii.

A third remedy is, to confer benefits and favours in return for hatred. "If thy enemy shall be hungry, give him to eat; if he be thirsty, give him to drink. This is to heap burning coals on his head."—Prov. xxv. 21. As water extinguishes fire, so do benefits anger. But in this prudence is to be observed.

11. The general remedies against anger are patience, mortification of our own will, humility, and charity. The serious meditation and remembrance of the passion and meekness of our blessed Redeemer will inspire us with a holy confusion for our want of patience, and will make us think nothing hard to suffer. The remembrance of our sins, and what we deserve for them, will give us true patience under all trials.

Any excessive attachment to riches or any other object, is a source of anger; for anything which threatens it disturbs the mind, and excites anger. All such attachments, therefore, must be retrenched; and he who finds any such growing in his heart must arm himself against its occasions; *e. g.*, against anydisturbance of mind, if his desire of gain or of riches be thwarted. He who is subject to whims and peevishness must overcome them by mortification. It is in vain that he takes precautions against exterior assaults, as long as he neglects the root of his distemper within his own breast. Jealousy, inquisitiveness, and credulity in hearing tale-bearers, a captious, cavilling humour, or a suspicious temper, easily fancying that others mean to insult us, are sources of passion, and must be corrected; fondness and attachments to foolish trifles must also be overcome. The mind must be made indifferent to them, and satisfied with whatever is first at hand.

Humility is the most necessary virtue to extirpate anger. A proud man thinks everything due to him, and that others never pay him sufficient respect, deference, or regard. All inordinate anger is founded in pride; for he who is angry desires to be revenged on those who contemn him; it is only the contempt of us, either real or imaginary, that moves us to passion; and could we separate contempt from the object which provokes,

we should feel it no longer an incentive to anger. If a stone hurt us by chance we are not angry at it, like a dog that bites the stick that hits him; but only when it is thrown at us with an evil intention to hurt. It is then chiefly the scorn that excites anger. Our pride is apt easily to conceive itself slighted. Had we the art of bearing contempt, contumelies, and injuries, we should have little experience of anger. "You know not how to suffer wrong, but I do," said a philosopher in Plutarch, to one who was angry. An humble man is always meek and good in temper. As he thinks nothing due to him, he imagines the least things too much; full of contempt of himself, he is persuaded that men do him justice, when they despise him. Thus, he never thinks himself ill-treated; and, as he always loves the last place, he finds no one to dispute it with him.

Charity is also a sovereign preservative against anger. "Charity is patient and kind; charity envieth not; dealeth not perversely; is not puffed up; is not ambitious; seeketh not her own; is not provoked to anger; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things."—1 Cor. xiii. What was the pattern of charity which Christ has set us? "Who, when he was reviled, did not revile; when he suffered, threatened not; but delivered himself to him that judged him unjustly."—1 Peter, ii. 23. If a man feels any secret antipathy against some particular person, on account of any disagreeableness in his manner, &c., he must watch over himself, never to be provoked at him, because of the danger to which such a disposition exposes him.

12. The particular means to overcome this passion are, first, never to speak or do anything, when we find our heart moved to anger, especially if this be anyway violent. It is much easier to be silent, than to speak on such occasion without heat or passion. Even when it is necessary to correct another without delay, and the correction cannot be suspended till the danger of anger be over, it ought not to take place till the mind be carefully calmed by some pause and short reflection; and the words and correction must be moderated by the rule of discretion, for fear passion be kindled. But, if possible, let it be deferred. The least vent given to the soul under the emotion of the heart, inflames the passion. Seneca tell us (l. 1. de Ira, c. 15), that Socrates said once to his slave: "I would beat thee if I were not angry." "Who can hope to govern his passion in anger, seeing that Socrates durst not expose himself to it?" says the

same philosopher. He adds (l. 3. de Ira, c. 12): "The greatest remedy of anger is a delay, that its heat may be cooled. Plato being about to beat a slave, perceiving himself angry, held his hand lifted up a long time, but would not strike. A friend asked him the reason. 'I punish myself for my anger,' said he. 'Do you, Speusippus, chastise him, for I am angry.'" In like manner, Archytas said to the slave, who had care of his vineyard, and who had totally neglected it: "How would I have chastised thee if I had not been angry," as Tully mentions (Tuscul. l. 4, m. 437). Athenodorus, a philosopher of Greece, advised Augustus, when he should be angry, to recite the twenty-four letters of the Greek alphabet before he spoke, as Aurelius Victor tells us in the Life of Theodosius. After the massacre of Thessalonica, St. Ambrose prescribed to the Emperor Theodosius the law, which he made, that no one should be executed till thirty days after the sentence.

Another remedy against anger is, that a person do never pardon himself the least emotion of passion, but enjoin himself some chastisement for it, either asking pardon of the persons against whom he was angry, if they are his superiors or equals; if they are inferiors, making them amends some other way, as by obliging words, condemning himself to some alms, prayer for the person, &c.

13. It is another necessary means, that a person subject to this vice should foresee, in his morning or evening prayer, the occasions of it, which he cannot shun, and that he meet them already prepared and armed against them. I knew a person, who, when one called for him, said to himself: Perhaps it is one that will call me rogue and thief, and treat me as the basest of wretches. If so, I shall be prepared to receive all, and shall meet only what I expect; I resolve not to suffer any emotion to arise in my heart, or to speak anything harsh. By this means no provocation surprised him, or ever moved him to anger. A man should thus arm himself before any probable occasion. Epictetus, the heathen moral philosopher, lays down this rule against anger: "Is your oil spilt? Is your estate unjustly taken from you? say to yourself: Meekness and peace of mind are to be purchased by me at this price. Nothing is acquired without cost. When you call your servant, think that perhaps he is not at hand, and, if he is, that he will not do according to your mind."—Enchir., c. 17. If a heathen could reason thus, how much more ought a Christian to bear all things, and to curb his passion for the preservation of this great virtue, the excellence of which, not only reason but faith

discovers to him, by the most noble supernatural motives, and by the high rewards which are promised to it? St. Stephen and the other saints could not be angry at their persecutors and murderers, knowing them to be the instruments by which they merited heaven, and for the present the greatest graces, especially the pardon of their sins. The holy Doctor Avila tells us (Ep. 5), that St. Elizabeth, daughter to the King of Hungary, most affectionately prayed that God would confer some singular mercy on every one that had injured her; and that God revealed to her this had pleased him above all other prayers, and that he granted for it more abundant graces, and the remission of all her sins. The holy reformer of La Trappe, abbot Rancè, used to say, when he met with persecution: "As long as the devil does not become a Christian, the world and the devil will always make war against those who serve God, but can never hurt them, unless they wound themselves by impatience. I often say: We ought to buy enemies for their weight in gold. This is my disposition this long time. Therefore do not pity me in my sufferings. My condition rather deserves envy than compassion."—Le Nain in his Life, B. 5, c. 2.

14. Had we true charity, we should be moved to compassion and zeal for our neighbour's sin, not to anger against him. "Has another done you an injury?" says St. Chrysostom (Serm. de Laude Dei), "grieve for his misfortune; weep for the wound of his soul, as our Lord deplored Judas. For he did not lament his own crucifixion, but that he was going to destroy himself. Has another injured you? Pray God that he may be reconciled to you, and heal his own sore. He is your brother, your member, of the same sacred regeneration or spiritual birth, and called to the same divine table and crown. Some one may say: If I do so, he will insult me the more. Then your recompense will be the greater. The devil has wounded him. He is not to be made worse; but you are to raise him up. If you, by anger, also fall, who will be able to help you both out of the precipice?" The same father in another place says: "You, who are sound and whole, ought in pity to soothe him who has hurt himself by anger against you, and to apply a remedy."—Hom. 61, Ol. 62. in Mat. t. 7, pp. 616, 617. He beautifully amplifies, that we reap great advantages and benefits from injuries, by bearing them with patience. "We obtain ourselves the remission of our sins. Moreover, you will be venerable to your enemies, though they were devils; or rather no one will be your enemy. The more he has injured you, the more ought you to pity and weep for him. If

this does not suffice, remember thy Lord was called Beelzebub; how much more ought you to bear such affronts? If you would have the examples of fellow-servants, remember Joseph's towards his brothers; remember Moses praying for the Hebrews, after all their injuries and snares; remember Paul wishing himself an anathema for the Jews, after all that he had suffered from them; and Stephen praying for his calumniators and murderers, that their sins might be forgiven them." Even the heathens have set us examples of patience. St. Basil mentions Pericles conferring benefits on his enemies, and Socrates bearing patiently buffets on his face. Hom. 24. de Legendis Libris Græcis. St. Gregory observes, that we must all suffer injuries; no man is just or perfect who does not bear them with patience. "There is no Abel, whom the malice of a Cain does not try."—Moral. l. 20, c. 21.

15. Nothing recommends us more to God; nothing is more venerable or more amiable before men, than meekness. Nothing is more glorious or greater. Constantine the Great, when told that some persons had cast stones at his statues, putting his hand to his forehead, said calmly: "I did not feel them." This action is justly represented as more glorious than all his victories and triumphs. For he is greater who governs himself, than he who conquers the strongest cities, as the poet says.

It will appear more reasonable and necessary to practise meekness and forgiveness to others, if we remember that we often give others much to bear by our imperfections. Nothing, therefore, is more just, than that we should show that indulgence which we desire to recive.

> "There's none but has some fault, and he is best,
> Most virtuous he, that's spotted with the least."
> Hor. l. 1, Sat. 3, v. 68.

> "And 'tis but just that he that hopes to find
> A pardon for his faults, should be as kind."
> Ib. v. 75.

> He, who would not have his sores to offend,
> Must pardon the pimples of his friend.

Another motive, which reason suggests, is, that without this mutual forgiveness peace amongst men is impossible, and dissensions are eternal. For hatred has this aggravating circumstance, that it is a vice which knows no end. "Other evils have their bounds, and every sin is finished with the fact; but

anger has no end; it is a permanent evil—a sin which is never over."—St. Cyprian, l. de Zelo, et Livore.

DISCOURSE LI.

ON TEMPERANCE AS A CARDINAL VIRTUE.

1. Temperance, in its largest acceptation, is defined by St. Thomas (2, 2æ, q. 141): "The moderation of every affection according to the prescript of reason." Tully had defined it: "The dominion of reason over lust and all other importunate passions."* In this extended sense it is an universal virtue, or a part in the composition of every virtue, as all virtues consist in the just medium which reason prescribes, and may be offended against either by excess or by defect. Thus, pride is an excess, abjectness a defect; both contrary to the moderation which humility prescribes in the true knowledge and rating of ourselves. See thy danger, my soul; every virtue is seated between contrary extremes, into either of which different passions labour to hurry thee. It is a mark which thou art sure to miss, if thou aimest either too high or too low. It is a goal encompassed with precipices on both sides, into one of which thou wilt fall, if thou sufferest thyself to go astray in any of the bye-roads.

2. Temperance, or, as it is called by the Wise Man, sobriety (Wisdom, viii. 7), taken more properly, is "the moderation and government of concupiscence or the love of pleasures, especially of those that consist in the senses of the taste and the touch." In this sense it is a cardinal virtue, or the source of a chain of many noble moral virtues, or the hinge, as it were, on which they hang. The chief of these are mortification of the senses and of the passions, chastity, purity, virginity, abstinence and sobriety, meekness, poverty of spirit, contempt of the world, the rational study of useful sciences, respecting every one's circumstances, the government of the tongue, modesty, or the government of a man's exterior, humility, mourning or compunction, cleanness of heart, peace of mind. All this glorious train of sweet and amiable virtues are the attendants of holy temperance. These victorious conquerors of all the base passions of depraved nature, by which we govern ourselves, restrain the sallies of our corrupted hearts,

* Dominium rationis in libidinem et omnes alios motus importunos.

triumph over our most dangerous and domestic enemies, and reign in happy interior peace within ourselves, carrying their banners under her direction. These are the beautiful flowers which grow in her garden, and are cultivated by her care. They are delightful streams, all flowing from her fountain. The other three cardinal virtues are usually reckoned first; because many of their duties are public, and regard the commonwealth or others: but, though temperance may be placed last, its importance is not the less, as it is the principal and most difficult duty of every man, whatever his circumstances or his state may be, to govern well himself, and keep his own powers and senses, especially his passions, in obedience to reason and virtue, and in good order. By this alone can he enjoy any true liberty or happiness, and be brought to acquit himself of all his duties, whether to God, to his neighbour, or to himself. How am I enamoured with the very prospect of this holy temperance! How earnestly do I desire the happy possession of it, to make it the spouse of my soul, the constant companion of my life! Its very name fills me with rapturous delights.

3. It is temperance that prunes my soul, and pares away whatever is inordinate in me or in my affections. It cuts off and removes all that can defile my heart or senses, and preserves me pure and spotless from all that load of infamous stench and filth, which I carry about me from the corruption of sin. Insomuch that, as St. Bernard observes (Serm. 22. in Cant.), St. Paul calls temperance absolutely the virtue of holiness, as when he says (1 Thess. iv. 3): "This is the will of God, your sanctification, that every one of you may know to possess his vessel in holiness and honour, not in the passion of lust." And (v. 7): "God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." "It is evident," says that father, "that he uses holiness for temperance." The Divine Spirit chooses his dwelling in our souls. But it is by this virtue we must prepare them to be a lodging for so holy and great a guest, who is no less than holiness itself. His eyes infinitely pure cannot bear the sight of the least impurity. He flies from all that is defiled. With what care must I adorn with temperance both my soul and my body, the one being his chosen spouse, the other his living temple! The dread thought of his infinite sanctity and infinite jealousy must make me always with trembling remember to what I am bound in this particular.

4. Temperance was the tribute, which God exacted from man in the state of innocence, when he enjoined our first parents in

paradise not to eat of or touch the tree of knowledge, lest they should die. Gen. ii. Their transgression of this precept and virtue forfeited their privileges, and overwhelmed all their posterity in a deluge of woes, and excited this revolt of our passions against ourselves, which we now groan under. O singular privilege of temperance, to which God has annexed the conservation of those high prerogatives, for which we are created! O cursed intemperance, whose dire effects we feel in the loss of them!

Much more in our present fallen state is manifold temperance the homage we are bound to pay to God in testimony of our fidelity and obedience to him. It is also the means, by which we must tame and vanquish our revolted passions, recover and maintain our superiority over them (the happiness which we lost with our innocence and original justice), give the most heroic proofs of our virtue and valour in the cause of God, and carry heaven by violence, which our base intemperance has shut against us. O happy virtue, that repairs the breaches made in our nature by sin, restores the calm of our affections and the peace of our minds, is the guardian of other virtues, crowns us with the most glorious trophies and victories, and carries heaven by violence! For "The kingdom of God suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away."—Matt. xi. 12.

5. We cannot coolly consider the direful mischiefs, which unthinking men every day draw upon themselves by intemperance, and not be struck with horror at the very name of so hideous a monster; such as innumerable sins, the eternal loss of souls, feuds and quarrels, both domestic and foreign, ruin of estates and families, premature old age and deaths, legions of cruel distempers more torturing than racks and wheels, grief, melancholy, and despair, uneasiness of friends, &c., from all which temperance preserves us. It frees us from the tyranny of insatiable desires, from grovelling, beastly appetites and sensual affections, raises our souls above this earth, and transforms them into angels.

6. The principal opponents of temperance are prosperity, sensual pleasures, and the passions of the mind. It teaches us true moderation both of our affections and whole comportment under the favours of prosperity, which to most men is the most dangerous trial of life. When its gale has exalted them, they suffer themselves to be transported and made giddy with it, so as to forget themselves and lose their reason. They give a free loose to their intemperate joy, ascribe their good fortune to themselves,

look upon it as a good, which is their own, and is no more to be moved, set their hearts upon it, puffed up with vain joy and foolish pride, saying in themselves with Nebuchodonosor in his glory: "Am not I the great, the successful man!" They lose all foresight of dangers, and grasp still greedily at higher things, or fall a prey to other passions, till unforeseen ruin, like a whirlwind, often overtakes and buries them in the midst of their golden dreams, and sweeps them off in their unrepented sins, unless some stroke of adversity had first been able to awaken them and open their eyes. Drunk with its intoxication, and swollen with empty pride, they not only forget themselves, but often their friends also, to whom they become haughty, insolent, and insupportable, and are only open to false flatterers, such as are never wanting on such occasions, and who only contribute to hasten their misfortune.

St. Antoninus (Sum. Part. 4, tit. 3, c. 7, fol. 29) observes, that concupiscence always inclines to evil within the soul; if prosperity exteriorly add its force to it, a man is drawn too violently to the danger by two powers together, the one exterior and the other interior: "On this acount scarcely any one is found, who, being in prosperity, makes a good use of it." Whence Lactantius writes thus to Demetrian, a nobleman, who had once been his disciple (1 de Op. Dei, p. 672):—"I rejoice for your prosperity; but only if it make no change in the state of your mind. For I fear lest its sweetness or custom creep insensibly into your heart. Wherefore I admonish you, and repeat again and again my admonitions, that you look not upon the goods of this life as real goods, but as treacherous cheats, and as snares by which our enemy seeks to entrap us."

7. Many have stood firm and inflexible under adversity, and suffered its severest shocks with unshaken bravery and virtue; whom prosperity has shamefully vanquished. Trial awakens their courage, and rouses sentiments of generosity and piety in their breasts. It likewise brings great advantages and occasions of virtue. But caresses come not as an enemy to challenge resistance, but as a treacherous friend. They are therefore received unwarily, and without precaution or mistrust; and as the power of charms is greater, though, indeed, more secret, and consequently more dangerous, than those of frowns, they soften the mind, enervate its vigour and strength, blind its sight, and easily draw it into the most fatal precipices, as Dalilah betrayed and overcame the valiant Sampson, invincible to the Philistines.

Now, temperance moderates the joy of prosperity, keeps down the spirits from rising in airy flights, anchors the heart in true humility and distrust, and secures the soul against the dangers of that treacherous enemy to virtue and wisdom. As fortitude furnishes weapons and strength against adversity, so temperance supplies curbs against the dangers of prosperity. Armed with these two virtues, the servant of God receives and bears both these extremes with an unalterable evenness of mind, neither desponding under one, nor presuming under the other, equally solicitous to improve all events, which Providence shall appoint, into occasions of doing all the good in his power.

8. The means to obtain and preserve this steady temper of virtue, under the dangers of the smiles of fortune, are, first, that a man do not look upon them as goods, as they never converted or made any one man good; nay, they are oftener the share of the wicked, and designed sometimes by God as their greatest spiritual punishment and curse. Secondly, nothing can be more slippery and inconstant than the possession of such advantages, which flow and ebb like the uncertain Euripus, and, when withdrawn, leave nothing but stench and mud behind them. Would any man stake his fortune on the stability of a weathercock? It is no less foolish to set our hearts upon, or place our felicity in, things so empty and so uncertain as are the goods of fortune. Thirdly, the most necessary rule of all others is, that a soul curb her inclination towards finding satisfaction in this prosperity, by entertaining the greatest fear and watchfulness under it, being sensible that it is a most slippery ground, on which, without an extraordinary grace, it is impossible to tread sure. It is often a pit dug for the ruin of souls, and God's heaviest curse upon abandoned sinners. Isa. xxvi. 10. They are a poison presented in honey. Only this fear can be the antidote. Lastly, a person must always remember that we are here only passengers; accordingly, we must set our hearts on nothing below heaven, and consider ourselves as strangers here. This motive St. Peter suggests as the most powerful, if we thoroughly penetrate our hearts with it: "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, to refrain yourselves from carnal desires, which war against the soul."—1 Pet. ii. 11. Frequent meditation on eternity, a contempt of the world, and fervent prayer, are the most indispensable and sovereign means to procure this grace. A holy sadness or compunction of heart and gift of tears is its opposite virtue, but hard to be maintained under the illusion of temporal prosperity. It is nourished

by the consideration of our sins and the sins of others, our present banishment and sighs for heaven, and the absence of our divine spouse and his grace.

9. Pleasure, especially that of the senses, is a second and main object of temperance. Pleasure in necessary and lawful functions of life, is an holy institution of our wise Creator for our well-being: but since the depravation of concupiscence by sin, it has become the greatest bane of virtue, and the fiercest incitement to evil. It is the most violent attractive to the heart. It solicits to the most shameful crimes, and with an importunity not to be repelled but by violence to ourselves. Here it is that temperance exerts its most heroic force: here it is the buckler of our souls.

It would be too austere, and an error against both faith and reason to assert, that all pleasure is criminal. The body is framed by nature to find a delight in those actions which are necessary to its being; and this delight is even inseparable from many of them. There are then some pleasures inseparable from life; and some others are also lawful, and may be used in moderation, and without attachment, for a relaxation of the mind, the wholesome exercise of the body, or even as comforts allowed by nature sometimes to alleviate the cares and burdens of life. But then the intention must not rest in these motives; they must be farther referred to God and his holy will, *e. g.*, that we may recruit our vigour to pursue our serious duties with greater alacrity and courage. For even the most innocent and most necessary pleasures will be in some degree sinful, if they are sought purely to gratify ourselves, by resting in their satisfaction, as St. Augustine proves at large in his books against Julian the Pelagian. Whence, he says (l. de Mor. Eccl., c. 21): "A temperate man has this rule in the things of this life, that he loves nothing of them, seeks nothing of them for themselves, but makes use of them as much as suffices for the necessity of this life and duties." This is indeed a difficult point in practice: whence, though it be lawful to relish the pleasure in such actions, referring them farther to the will of God, yet the saints would choose to deny themselves such a pleasure, if not in some necessary action involving it, for fear their hearts should be tainted by it; yet this without too great a moroseness and inflexible austerity.

Besides this first condition of the intention, not being terminated in the pleasure of itself, a second requisite to exempt it from sin is, that it be not sucked in with a vehement eagerness and greediness, or any attachment; as this is always inordinate,

and, *e. g.*, in eating is the proper character of gluttony. To avoid this fault, many have by habit so mortified their senses, as to pay no attention at all to what they eat, or to its taste, unless asked about it.

It is an essential precept also, never to use any lawful pleasure to excess, or in any other inordinate manner.

Nor yet are all these precepts sufficient: it is moreover absolutely necessary, that no one do allow himself too frequent use of lawful pleasures; for he would thus inevitably enervate his heart by them, and create in himself too unbridled a thirst after such delights, which would often draw him to excesses in them, and also in coveting such as are criminal in their own nature. This love of pleasure becomes entirely master of the heart by indulgence. The more perfectly is it mortified, the more easy and complete will be the victory over this dangerous enemy, which is cut off only by holy temperance. The senses of the taste and touch being the most wild and furious, if they are allowed to gain strength, and being the most easily inflamed, must be treated with particular severity.

10. The passions are principal objects of temperance, and to which even its other objects are referred. For it is chiefly to keep them in subjection that we mortify the senses. By a passion is meant a vehement motion excited in the sensitive part of the soul. Love is the principal, and in some measure, the source of the others; for even anger arises from a love of the contrary object. The philosophers place six passions in the concupiscible part of the soul; for if any good be represented to it simply, it creates love: if it be considered as present, it excites joy: if as distant, desire. If an evil object be presented to the mind simply, it produces hatred: if as future and approaching, fear: if as present, grief, or with regard to other persons, compassion. There are five in the irascible part, all which arise from some of the former, and are usually more vehement and raging. These regard the means of obtaining good or shunning evil; and are as follow. If the obtaining of the good, or avoiding of the evil, be considered as possible or impossible, there arises in us hope or despair; the prospect of a threatening future evil produces fear or courage: the horror of a present evil kindles anger and indignation. An imaginary good or evil has the same effect upon the mind as if it were real. Under love fall the passions of pride, or inordinate love of our own excellence; ambition, or the love of power, riches, &c., and lust, or the love of carnal pleasures, and so of the rest.

The springs of the original passions are a wise institution of nature to give by them wings, or an extraordinary strength and vigour to the soul, on occasions which require greater vigour in her. She is by them raised above herself, and does things almost miraculous. She runs, finds nothing difficult, nothing impossible. They were then implanted in us to be helps to us in the prosecution of virtue, and especially love and hope; as long as they remain rational, sedate, and without any disturbance, they are most conducive to the health of the body, as they promote most powerfully the equable flow of its fluids. Their inordinateness arises from the sin of our first parents. They are in their origin from God; and the work came out of his hands pure and holy. How great is our misfortune, that these appetites should be so perverted in us!

11. Passions, in the corruption of our nature, are misplaced by us upon false objects, are seditious and unruly, hurtful to our souls, to our peace of mind, and to the health of our bodies. Our imagination considers false goods as real, and we exercise our love and other passions upon them, which ought to be employed on God, and for virtue only. And whereas they were originally regular movements to good, always obedient to reason, now they wait not for her direction, nor even for any command of the will; but hurry the soul impetuously to their false objects, anticipating reason, which they were instituted only to follow. Nor does their evil stop here. Their tendency often carries to criminal objects; and their manner is likewise inordinate in the disturbance, vehemence, and other circumstances contrary to reason and virtue. Above all, they are seditious and openly rebellious against reason, opposing her laws, and refusing to obey her orders. She was established as queen to govern the soul; the passions were appointed to be her officers only, to execute her just dictates; but they have shaken off their obedience, move without her command, nay, refuse to listen to it, or desist from their unruly seditions at her voice. They set up for masters and tyrants, and having shaken off the bridle and got the head, drag the poor soul down the most fatal precipices. So that unless we hold these monsters always chained, we will certainly be undone by them. They are furious wild beasts, which, if once left unmuzzled, immediately tear in pieces and devour their keepers. We have reason to deplore the misery of man in this particular. Brute beasts governed by instinct are satisfied with what is necessary; they never torture themselves about imaginary evils, nor pursue imaginary

goods: they do not run into the excesses of intemperance, to the destruction of health and life, and are strangers to the extravagance and voluntary pangs which men plunge themselves into. Nature, uniform in them, governs their actions, and restrains their cravings. But man, endowed with reason, and lord of this lower creation, feels those conflicts and lust within himself, which the ass and the mule never suffer, and is often a voluntary slave to his own lawless desires, which master his reason. He has it indeed in his power, from reason and grace, to curb them by temperance, and maintain his empire over himself. This he must do by mortifying them: first, by never placing them on objects that are criminal, or empty, and vain; secondly, by governing their appetites, and restraining them; thirdly, by fixing them only on God and virtue.

12. This lawless tyranny of his passions not only drags him into sin, but overflows his heart with gall and wormwood, remorse, smart stings, fretting, and disquietudes. He often suffers more cruel pains and anguish from them in his soul than he could in his body from the severest racks; and the inward state of his mind is more disordered, when a prey to them, than a State torn in pieces by intestine convulsions and seditions. Imagine the miseries of a commonwealth in which the inferior officers refused obedience and subordination to their sovereign, and the subjects to both; and all were armed against one another, mutually to plunder and tear each other in pieces; all in such a State would be confusion, desolation, fear, pillage, slaughter, and distress, without any law, any sanctuary, any safety, or peace, either at home or abroad. This is but a faint image of the frightful disorders of a soul, in which all the powers and passions, instead of obeying reason, are at war with it, and with each other.

Add, that irregular passions are insatiable. The desires, which reason suggests, are limited and easily satisfied; but those, which are inordinate, stop nowhere: as a man out of the way may wander for ever, and not meet his term at last. These covetings, like a dropsy, increase, and grow more unsatisfied and tormenting by being the more indulged.

It is another misery of this jarring of the passions, that they fill the heart enslaved to them with restless disquietudes and commotions. The waves of the most tempestuous sea, worked up by the most furious hurricanes and storms, are not so furious or inconstant as its violent movements, often as vain and ridiculous

as they are wicked and shameful. Oh! what is man, unless temperance tame and govern these monsters? Without this virtue he is an abyss of crimes, extravagancies, and miseries. He must, by watchfulness, prevent as much as possible the risings of the first motions of these fierce rebels, by which they so often anticipate the will. He must, also, by habitual mortifications, always hold the reins.

13. The result of this holy temperance is the happy virtue of interior peace, by which the soul is joyfully subject to God, and in what is good and just to men, and by which she governs all her desires and appetites in the sole pursuit and love of virtue. This happy state is the paradise of the heart on earth, and its most acceptable sacrifice to God, who chooses to dwell only in such. "His place was made in peace."—Ps. lxxv. 3. "Have peace, and the God of peace will be with you."—2 Cor. xiii. 11. This amiable virtue and temper is purchased by a most ready obedience to God, and, in all that is lawful, to men who are our superiors; by a cheerful resignation to Providence under all events and afflictions; by condescension to all men as far as reason and virtue can allow, and sincere concord with all; by no way regarding the opinion, which others may form to our advantage or disadvantage, but studying unfeignedly to serve all whenever in our power, and watching over ourselves to give no one any scandal or offence, as much as possible; by bearing patiently injuries and the evils we cannot remedy; by a purity of conscience from sin, and by the victory of our passions through the help of constant mortifications and watchfulness.

This is the victory, than which nothing can be greater or more glorious. The valour of Alexander, Cæsar, Augustus, and other great conquerors of the world, is pitiful meanness of spirit, compared to this. All those heroes were base slaves to their unruly passions. That fortitude is much more rare, more our own growth, and alone truly illustrious and advantageous both in time and eternity, by which a man overcomes his passions, commands himself, and gives to reason and virtue the absolute command over his heart and all his powers. "A patient man is better than the stout; and he who commands his own soul than the conqueror of cities."—Prov. xvi.

Temperance takes in the government of all our selfish affections and passions; it includes humility, modesty, chastity, and what is more strictly called temperance or moderation in the desire and use of meat and drink. The author of our being has

planted in us desires towards those objects, which are necessary for the preservation and conveniency of life. But, as the high ends of our being are not confined to the present state, and we are endowed with nobler powers and affections, by which we are determined to the pursuit of more excellent objects, wherein our true perfection and happiness consist, it is plain that these inferior appetites were ordained to be in subjection to reason, and restrained within such limits as to be consistent with our superior end. See James, i. 14, 15; Luke, xxi. 34. By a stupid indulgence of sensual appetites, the minds of men become so degenerate as to lose all relish of those infinitely superior objects, for which they were created. Phil. iii. 19; Rom. xvi. 18. Nourishment is appointed by God to repair the daily wastes of the body, and preserve its organs to minister to the proper offices of life. But by intemperance the superior powers of the soul are clogged; health, as well as the heart, is overcharged with surfeiting; the faculties of nature are overloaded, and indisposed for their proper functions. To eat and drink, without a view and subordination to the proper ends, is to be guilty of intemperance; it is not to eat and drink "to the glory of God," as the Apostle directs. Solomon pronounces the land happy, whose princes eat in due season, &c. Eccles. xx. 17. It is in the superiority of the soul, in its freedom, and in the dominion of reason and conscience over the lower desires and passions, that this virtue chiefly consists. It is, therefore, seated in the mind, as every virtue must be; though it requires this exterior restraint.

How base for man to degrade himself to the situation of brutes, and render himself mean, contemptible, and miserable! Temperance fits us for a heavenly life. 1 Pet. i. 13. It is a great preservative from snares and temptations. 1 Thess. v. 6. 1 Pet. v. 8. 1 Cor. ix. 34.

A resolution neither to be shocked by the difficulties of our present state, nor softened by its pleasures, nor terrified by its pains, so as to be diverted from our duty, must accompany our whole conduct, giving to each part all diligence. 2 Pet. i. 5. It is not to be confined to one point, but must run through the whole detail of the duties, giving all diligence to every virtue, all diligence to attain knowledge, all diligence in the exercise of patience, temperance, godliness, and charity. To this the divine assistance will always be given, which never supersedes the necessity of our own endeavours, but is always united with them. As David giving charge to Solomon concerning that good work

of building the Temple, thus encourages him: "Arise and be doing, and the Lord will be with thee."—1 Chron. xxii. 16. God does not deal with us as unintelligent machines, but as rational creatures. He does not make us happy without our own knowledge, choice, and concurrence; and never gives the least countenance to supine negligence. In the affairs of common life, "the hand of the diligent maketh rich; and he becomes poor, that deals with a slack hand."—Prov. x. 4. It is more so with virtue, where the difficulty is greater from the many infirmities that encompass us. These are no arguments for sloth or discouragement; on the contrary, they should incite us to greater zeal and activity, according to Solomon's proverbial expression: "If the iron be blunt, he must put it to the more strength."—Eccl. x. 10; see Prov. ii. 3. Besides diligence in making use of all means, and earnestness in the vigorous exertion of all our powers and strength, constancy is required. For these obligations are extended to every virtue, and equally bind us at every time. Our resolution must be steadfast and permanent, not like the warm but abortive zeal of those, who receive the word with joy, but only endure for awhile; for when "affliction and temptation ariseth, they are offended."—Matt. xiii. 20, 21. "Their diligence is as the morning cloud, and the early dew that passeth away."—Osee, vi. 4.

Fortitude is called virtue or courage: for it carries in it the idea of hazards and difficulties; and the excellence of it consists in a magnanimous superiority over all dangers and opposition. To sink under difficulties, and not to pursue good purposes against them, is to have no goodness at all. The Gospel represents this state as a warfare, nay, as a continual fight. 1 Tim. vi. 12. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit." A multitude of unreasonable and impetuous inclinations tending to sin, take their rise from the body. These must be resisted, and all our passions and desires regulated and restrained. This is one of the most arduous duties of religion, and requires the utmost vigour and firmest resolution of our souls. Again, the world, or the corrupt part of mankind, acts in opposition to the spirit of the Gospel. Our Saviour states that an irreconcileable enmity exists between the world and his followers; and shows they are always to expect hatred, ill usage, and injuries from it. How difficult must it be to stand unmoved against a train of sufferings, against galling reproaches, despiteful rage, and all manner of wrongs, and still to maintain integrity, meekness, and patience? It is further to

be considered, that invisible malignant powers have, by divine permission, great influence upon the affairs of this world, and instigate to evil. Eph. i. 2; vi. 12. He who fights manfully does not shrink, nor draw back at every wound, much less on every threatening or danger, but maintains his station, and goes on in his course, resolving to conquer. 2 Tim. ii. 3.

DISCOURSE LII.

ON MORTIFICATION.

As the mystery of the cross was a scandal and a folly to the Jews and Gentiles, so is now the practice of it even to many Christians. They acknowledge it to be the instrument of salvation and the only road to bliss; yet, in the practice of their lives, are no less openly its adversaries than the Pagans, as they are no less eager in seeking their own ease and satisfaction, and denying no delight to their senses which they can crave. Every one seems to look upon himself as born only to enjoy ease and pleasure. Old and young, rich and poor, nobles and labourers, run after this ever-delusive charm, according to their inclinations, and think this their portion, and that all suffering is an injustice to them. If they refrain from unlawful pleasures, they imagine they do their duty to God. But religion gives us very different ideas: "The kingdom of God suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away."—Matt. xi. 12.

In that happy state of innocence, in which man was created, God was his centre; and his soul, with all her powers, was created to love him in all things, and this with pleasure and ease. "God made man upright."—Eccl. viii. 30. The senses conveyed no allurements to unlawful pleasures or excesses; and the inferior, or sensitive part of the soul, received no impressions but what were conformable to the superior, or to reason, which it obeyed, and to which it was always subject; nor had man, within himself, any concupiscence, or any irregular appetite able to excite any disorderly motion or temptation—the rule of rectitude alone engaged and commanded all his powers and senses; but the soul, having revolted against God by sinning, her sensitive appetite rebelled against her own reason, and often, even against her will, excites such motions or affections as she herself condemns: "The

evil which I will not, that I do."—Rom. viii. 19. Thus, as a just punishment of his disobedience to his Creator, man finds his body, and the sensitive appetite in his soul, rebellious against his own reason; both putting obstacles to his good desires, and also stirring up in him irregular ones. Thus, "the flesh lusts against the spirit."—Gal. v. 17. This rebellion of his own faculties creates in him a continual intestine war, which God permits for our perpetual humiliation, and for our trial, as he left the Jebusites amidst the Jews for their exercise.

This jarring and repugnance of our passions with reason, and this propensity of our depraved nature to evil, lay us under a necessity of the constant practice of mortification to subdue them, and keep them within the bounds of submission and obedience. By it, pride is to be overcome, self-love and inordinate affection to creatures rooted out, and all our passions restrained. If ever the curb be removed, they break loose and become ungovernable. To think of gratifying them constantly in what may seem in itself not criminal, and still to hope to have them under command in the time of violent temptations, is to pretend not to have sinned in Adam, not to have contracted this universal contagion of mankind, to be privileged against our spiritual enemies, and exempt from the common law of God's providence in the promises of his graces and of his glory; for he has annexed them to this means. It is only by our fidelity in the practice of it that we can obtain his strength, and be crowned by him with victory. We may prolong our prayers, frequent the sacraments, and multiply good works; it is all in vain, if we join not mortification. Our passions are tigers, which always grow fiercer by being soothed. Who ever caresses and fortifies an enemy against himself? It is a man's study always to weaken and reduce him. This is, above all, true of our spiritual enemies, and chiefly our domestic ones. We are, of ourselves, too weak for them, and have no other means to procure the protection of God.

Experience shows how furious concupiscence becomes by being flattered, even in little things. Passions might be easily curbed in children; but their first little inclinations to pride, vanity, anger, sloth, love of pleasure, &c., by being indulged, grow stronger and stronger, and form tyrannical habits, which often govern men in all their thoughts and actions. Their senses, as it were, of their own accord, eagerly catch at all objects that are agreeable to them, whether vicious or innocent. The will also seeks to please itself in all things, and all a man's powers become

to him continual and violent tempers to evil. Concupiscence heightens the acts in them to a degree almost irresistible, as it acts with quickness and with impetuosity. With quickness; for, as it is, in some measure, the operation of nature itself, so this state of corruption and of nature, fortified by habit, seizes its object, or excites its inclination, without deliberation; as fire, which acts naturally, burns in the very instant it falls on matter disposed to receive it. Thus it often waits not for the command of the slow will, nor the process of a deliberation; by its promptitude it prevents both the understanding and the will, and gathers the first fruits, or, to speak more properly, sows the first seed of the disorderly affection before it appears. Though this motion, when entirely indeliberate and invincible, is not sinful, it is still a great misery; it may also be sinful in its cause, which may be wilful in unmortified souls. We must add, that the will and reason, being prevented by the sensitive part, are in great danger of being drawn into a partnership, and a soul of becoming guilty by some degree of consent. For the will to be victorious, it must snatch the act back out of the hands of the enemy, as of a thief who has already seized it. Now, mortification prevents, at least, such inordinate motions being frequent and violent. It keeps this enemy in subjection and obedience; if it make any sallies of this nature, the will, by habitual mortification, easily, and as it were, naturally, is ready to suppress them. It is perpetually watching over itself against such motions, and is always ready armed against them, and will not easily take any part in them.

Secondly, concupiscence is also strong and violent, often obstinate in its assaults, and, unless weakened by mortification, becomes morally irresistible. God has, indeed, subjected it to the command of free-will: "Its appetite shall be under thee."—Gen. iv. 7. But he has made mortification the condition of this command; this power he owes to his strength in this war, and it is the means to which God has promised his graces. He has established it to be our spiritual armour, both offensive and defensive.

If we add, that concupiscence never ceases laying snares and making assaults upon us, we shall see the necessity of continual mortification to be still greater. Were it confined to certain actions, times, or places, our vigilance might allow us some moments of respite; but as it never interrupts its efforts, and is always weighing us down, we must never be wearied in always labouring

to subdue it, and nothing less than an indefatigable courage in mortification can resist it. Alas! without this it infects all our actions, even our virtues. Everything in us will be corrupted; not one fibre in our hearts, not one affection will remain pure; its contagion will be universal over all our faculties, and spread itself in a greater or lesser degree through all our actions and thoughts, and, acquiring daily new strength, it will grow continually more triumphant in us.

Men say, our senses and inclinations may be gratified in pleasures which are lawful and moderate. It is true that we may use, in temperance, some lawful comforts of this life, without passion or inordinate attachment to them. But if we do this with eagerness or too often, it will be both criminal and pernicious. If we accustom our will or senses to please themselves, so as very rarely to contradict them, they will be insatiable, and will always burn with an itching after what is agreeable to them, and after unlawful satisfactions, and it will be no more in our power to command them, or stop our desires within the just bounds of virtue and temperance, than to rise a dike to hem the swelling waves of the sea. "If thou givest to thy soul her desires, she will make thee a joy to thy enemies."—Eccl. xviii. 31. On passions Bernetz says (t. 1, 13, 175): "Mortification, by procuring us the command over passions, purchases us the sweetest peace and the greatest enjoyment of life. Their reign in us fills us with an insatiable, cruel, and tormenting thirst, gnaws and tears us inwardly without ceasing, and makes our hearts the most frightful scene of disorder and confusion. Men, in such a state, groan under the most insupportable slavery and its heavy load, without being sensible of it. Could we see such a heart naked, we would pity and abhor it. Such is the state of a soul a prey to her passions. God could not create man to be so miserable. No; he reduces himself to such a condition. God leaving him subject to passions, since the disorder he has brought upon himself by sin, has instituted and taught him a means not to be hurt by them, but to make them a matter of his triumph. This is mortification. If the remedy seem bitter, we must remember the violence and miseries of our diseases, and we shall think it pleasant and easy. Physicians lay open the dangers and obstinacy of a distemper to magnify the cure, and to recommend the strength of their medicines. If we consider the frightful disorders of the passions, and sound the depth of those spiritual maladies, we shall embrace the

cure with joy, and extol the incomparable sweetness of its effects. Ah! he who has indulged his flesh and inclinations, is not enabled to brook the inevitable severities, contradictions, and disappointments, which all must meet in this life. What furies does he feel in his breast under them! What trouble, rage, and disturbances! If we see a child humoured and pampered in all things from the cradle, we cry out: What affliction and bitterness do his good parents prepare one day for themselves! What miseries for their spoiled favourite! The time will come when he will repay their indulgence with its proper fruits, and when he shall suffer in himself their direful effects. On the contrary, one who from his cradle has been taught to refuse many things to his senses and inclinations, and to curb his desires, enjoys a calm and peace which is unalterable, and by the amiable sweetness of his happy temper, easily triumphing over all passions, charms all others by his virtue, and the marks thereof, which shine in his very countenance, and the happiness of which he tastes in his own breast. O sweet fruit! a happy recompense of holy mortification. Sin created disorder in man's soul and body, and subjects it to a revolt and a perpetual war within itself; mortification removes that jarring, takes away, in a great measure, that disorder, and restores, in part, the due subordination, which man possessed in himself in original justice; and it is part of the happiness of that state. As we cure the body by purging its superfluous and noxious humours, so we heal the soul by cutting off its evil appetites and desires, as Plato says in his Georgia."

If continual mortification be essentially necessary as a preservative against sin, it is no less so as the means requisite to repair past sins. We are sinners, and bound to do penance. Now, this requires works of mortification, which must be the fire, by which we sacrifice our members to God, repair the injuries we have committed against God by them, and make them serve justice. "As you have yielded your members to serve uncleanness and iniquity to iniquity; so now yield your members to serve justice unto sanctification."—Rom. vi. 19. As our life is to be a continual penance, so must it be a continual martyrdom of mortification. Also daily sins require daily remedies. The just, even the most perfect, have always superfluous affections to retrench and cut off.

To be engrafted in Christ, and made his members, we must bear his image, which is to be framed by mortification in our soul; by it, the love of the world, and the image of old Adam is

to be effaced; it is the pencil which must form the new man in us. By its daily operation, we must every day be enabled to say more and more perfectly: "I live now, not I, but Christ lives in me."—Gal. ii. 20. To be always crucified, always dying to ourselves, is the great work, by which this change must be continually more and more perfected: it is that to which we have bound ourselves in baptism, wherein we engaged ourselves to this daily death to the old man, to imitate the death of Christ. "All we who were baptized in Christ, were baptized in his death. For we are buried together with him by baptism into death."—Rom. vi. 3, 4.

By the continual exercise of mortification, we must likewise bear a resemblance with Christ, who though he stood not in need of mortification for himself, or to subdue any passions, which, in him, with all his senses and powers, were most perfectly obedient to reason and grace, yet to purchase this remedy for us, and give us an example, he was pleased to lead the most mortified, laborious, and painful life on earth. "Christ did not please himself"—Rom. xv. 3, though his will was ever holy. And as to exterior mortification of the body, he chose to be born in the coldest season of the year, and to be subjected to its severities, and to all corporal wants, laid in a manger, in an open stable, deprived even of those comforts which are not denied to the most miserable. Only eight days old, he would undergo the painful ceremony of circumcision, and begin so soon to spill his blood. His hidden life, during thirty years, was, for the most part, spent in manual labour. When he left this state, he entered into a wilderness; and there, without any house to shelter him from the weather, and serve as a retreat, he spent forty days in a rigorous fast, without taking any nourishment, employing the power of his divinity to preserve his life under that severity, but not to abate the suffering of it, or the pain of hunger. If his public life appeared less austere than that of St. John Baptist, it was composed of self-denials, mortification, sufferings in laborious journeys, fatigues, sweats, poverty, reproaches, and often wants of necessaries, not having a place to lay his head on. And in what sufferings and humiliations did he not close his mortal life! All for our example. "Think diligently upon him that endureth such opposition against himself from sinners, that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds; for you have not yet resisted unto blood."—Heb. xiii. 3, 4. "He is the way, the truth, and the life."—John, xiv. 6.

Mortification not only expels and overcomes vice, but obtains also the most special heavenly gifts of God, who crowns them with victory over the passions. He is always ready to bestow them upon us; but the obstacles of our irregular affections and passions stop his liberal hand. Spiritual and carnal affections are opposite to one another, and can never be joined together. The flesh is nourished with visible things, and delights in corruption; the spirit only with spiritual and incorruptible objects. Whence, the apostle says, that "flesh and blood shall not possess the kingdom of God."—1 Cor. xv. 15. No man sows seed on ground overrun with thorns and weeds, but he firsts rids and cleanses it. Neither does God bestow his heavenly seed on an unmortified heart filled with earthly affections, which would choke it. Mortification must first dispose the soul. It dispels the darkness which clouds the understanding, by cutting off impure and superfluous affections and desires. Thus it procures heavenly light in the understanding, which instructs and directs, teaching, in an effective and clear manner, the evils of sin and the paths of virtue, not in mere words, which only sound in the ear, or speculatively fill the mind.

In like manner, it purifies the will from the clogs of earthly affections, and obtains for it the heavenly fire of spiritual affections and divine love. That high mountain cannot be approached, nor even seen by heavy souls drowned in the flesh; mortification strips them of it, and gives the will wings to mount to God, as it purifies the eyes of the understanding to contemplate him.

Nor is there any virtue which can be acquired, even in the lowest degree, without the help of mortification, which must prune away the opposite vicious affections that spring from concupiscence, and which fight against every virtue. As the superfluous branches must be pruned off the vine, or it can produce no good grapes; so neither can our souls bring forth the good fruits of virtue, unless pruned and cultivated with much greater care. It would be easy to show this by an induction of every particular virtue. "Man knows not its price; nor is it found in the land of those that live daintily."—Job, xxviii. 13.

Again: every virtue requires heroic acts, which cannot be exercised without mortifying corrupt nature. We cannot be humble, chaste, patient, meek, &c. but by mortification, which is the general means of all virtue, both to perform courageously its most difficult acts, and to remove its obstacles. The garments of the old Adam cannot be thrown off without violence, nor the act of the new be practised often without difficulty.

Mortification is particularly necessary, to obtain the great gift of prayer. To contemplate or pray with attention, and pure inflamed affections, the great condition is purity of heart, free from earthly desires and affections. These are dust, which cloud the spiritual eyes of the soul, and defile the bed of the heart.

God's delight is to communicate himself to men, and to fill their hearts; but he is a jealous spouse, and cannot enlighten an understanding, or place his delights in a heart which are not totally his. The tumult of passions, and the filth and stench of disorderly affections, indispose a soul for his conversation. It was the saying of the admirable abbot Nilus: "Whatever you bear patiently, you find the fruit of it in prayer." St. Ignatius of Loyola, hearing a person called a man of great contemplation, corrected the words thus: "Say rather, a man of great mortification;" expressing the root or source of his rare gift of prayer. Mortification and prayer are the two great means of Christian perfection, which is begun, increased, and completed by them, and they mutually assist each other. Mortification disposes to prayer, and this again perfects the mortification, especially of the interior powers. Its business is to beg that they may be more and more purified.

Mortification, accompanied with prayer, is the great means of Christian perfection. The unmortified may multiply prayers, alms, and all other good works; but they lose the greater part of the merit of these virtues, through the mixture of self-love and passions, and will always be at a great distance from even the sight of perfect virtue, or pure love of God. They can never say to God entirely and without reserve, with the prophet: "I am yours."—Ps. cxviii. 94. This is an easy word, and very common; "Facilis vox et communis videtur," as St. Ambrose says in Ps. cxviii. Serm. 12, n. 37. Men may easily persuade themselves that they borrow these words of the prophet sincerely, but how few understand them; few penetrate their sense or extent; few repeat them truly. "Facilis vox, sed paucorum."—Ib. Only those are to be expected, who are universally mortified to themselves and to all creatures; who love only God, and seek no other inheritance or portion in their hearts, but him alone.

God bestows all his special graces and gifts only on the mortified. If a king should desire to favour, or even adopt the son of some slave, he would first require that the youth should free himself from all his rustic manners and dispositions, change his dress, and then begin to appear at court. So God requires the soul to be rid of her carnal affections. Indeed they are opposite

to his grace, nor are they compatible with it; they delight only in what is visible and corruptible, as the senses themselves are; but God's spirit cleaves only to what is invisible, spiritual, and eternal. It is, then, not to be communicated to a soul, not disposed by mortification to receive it. And the more mortified a soul is, in the same degree does she advance more in spiritual light, divine love, and other gifts.

Mortification is a voluntary painful affliction, or self-denial for virtue. That which is found in resisting vice is of precept; as is also so much of the free acts of this virtue as is necessary to satisfy for sin, to subdue the passions, and to enable us to comply with all our duties. For these ends there is a strict obligation of exercising frequent acts both of interior and exterior mortification, over and above those particular acts, which obedience to the Church or to superiors, or the particular circumstances in which we live, enjoin us. This is a precept of the law of nature, and of the Gospel or positive law of God. It has pleased almighty God not to determine clearly the bounds which are of precept in regard to each particular matter, and this that no one might dare to fix to himself any in the practice of virtue, which every one is bound to make the exercise of his whole life, and not to imagine his martyrdom finished but with his last breath. The most perfect, and those who have acquired the greatest mastery over themselves, would soon lose it, were they to let go the reins. Our passions can be subdued, but never extirpated; they always live within us, like fire hidden under the ashes, which blazes out again, if set free. Weeds in a garden, or superfluous branches in the vine, grow again, unless they are always kept low.

Mortification is twofold; one called exterior, which is occupied in subduing the body, the tongue, and the senses; the other is called interior, which bridles the will, and governs the affections, thoughts, and imagination. For man consists of these two parts, and has a conflict to sustain in each, a resistance from each in the practice of virtue and extirpation of vice. Concupiscence resides in the inordinate tendency of the soul to evil; but the senses are the windows through which it is inflamed, and the body is its chief incentive. Both, therefore, are to be restrained by the constant practice of this double mortification; and, according to the measure of our progress herein, chiefly in the interior mortification and humility, we shall advance in the love of God. It will reign in us in proportion as we shall die to ourselves and to created things. The diminution of concupiscence is the increase of

charity; where perfect charity reigns, there is no concupiscence; St. Augustine, l. 83, qu. 31. If a man should, with great labour, have amassed an apparently large heap of virtue, without dying to himself, it would be only an empty show and outside, concealing a fund of secret self-love.

If we desire that concupiscence should not burn and consume us, mortification must extinguish its flames. If we wish to extirpate sin in our hearts, and subdue our passions, mortification must destroy the one, and tame the other. If we pray to be enlightened and inflamed, and enriched from above to know and love good and spiritual things, it is by mortification we must be prepared for such gifts. "Souls without it," says St. Basil (Or. 21), "are like heavy birds, which have indeed wings, but are too bulky to rise from the earth with them." As mortification must begin a spiritual life, so a progress in it must be its advancement and perfection. Whence Christ says of his Father: "Every branch which beareth fruit he will prune, that it may bring more fruit."—John, xv. 2. "For if they were not clean (by mortification) they could not bring fruit; and if they were not cleansed and pruned more and more, they could not bring more fruit. Wherefore he prunes more and more those that are clean and fruitful, that they may produce more fruit as they become more pruned. But those which are not pruned become barren," says St. Austin, Tr. 80. in Joan.

Though interior mortification be the more noble and the more essential part, it cannot subsist without the exterior, and it would be an error in faith to deny the necessity and obligation of the latter. And as its acts consist in actions, which are exterior and sensible, the occasions of exercising them are more palpable, consequently more easily seized; which is an advantage it possesses above that which is interior and spiritual, the acts of which are to be facilitated by it. It would be a false pride and presumption for any one to pretend to true interior mortification, without the assistance of the exterior.

The latter is also necessary in itself; our body having been the instrument of sin must be the victim of repentance, and be punished by mortification. Secondly, as Christ suffered in his body, so are we to suffer in our criminal ones, crucifying our flesh, that we may live by his spirit, and "fill up those things, that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ in our flesh."—Col. ii. 4. "Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth; for you are dead. Mortify, therefore, your members,

which are upon the earth."—Col. iii. 2, 3, 5. Thirdly, every mortification is an agreeable sacrifice to God, a seed of an immense glory to come, and a means to procure for our souls inward strength and grace. "Though our outward man be corrupted, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory."—2 Cor. iv. 16, 17. This is what the apostle conjures us to do by the most endearing motives of God's mercy, his darling attribute. "I beseech you by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service."—Rom. xii. 1.

Fourthly, intemperance is to be restrained. All its pernicious consequences are so many motives for our mortification. When the Israelites had impatiently desired flesh and been fed with quails in the wilderness, whilst the meat was yet in their mouths, the Lord struck them, and the place was called the sepulchres of concupiscence. Num. xi. 33, 34. The Wise Man prays: "Lord, take from me concupiscence of the belly, and let not concupiscence of lust seize me, and deliver me not to an unbridled and undisciplined soul."—Eccl. xxiii. 6. These evils mortification only can deliver me from. It alone can allay the heat of those passions, preserve us from their furious assaults, or make us victorious under them. Fifthly, it prepares the soul to receive grace and heavenly wisdom, "which is not found in the land of those who live daintily."—Job, xxviii. 13.

Lastly, the flesh is our enemy, and opposes us in the service of God, if it be pampered and treated delicately. It is an adversary, the most implacable, the most inveterate, and the most dangerous. It everywhere follows us, nor can we fly from it. Mortification is the armour that God has given us against it. If we neglect it, and cherish this treacherous serpent, we are sure to fall by it. "He who nourishes his servant delicately from his childhood, shall afterwards find him stubborn."—Prov. xxix. 21. The body was given us to be the slave of the soul, and to obey reason and God in all things. It proudly rebels against both, would be master, and enslave my spiritual and immortal soul. Shall I tamely submit it to such a tyranny? "I am too great, and born to too great things, to be the slave of my body," as the Heathen philosopher could say; Seneca, Ep. 65. "A wise man is not the lover, but the steward of his body, as of a necessary burthen."—Id. Ep. 92.

DISCOURSE LIII.

ON THE MORTIFICATION OF THE TASTE BY TEMPERANCE IN EATING AND DRINKING.

1. The taste being the source of all the sins of gluttony and drunkenness, a sense in itself fierce and vehement, and of daily necessity and danger to us, great solicitude is requisite to keep it in due subjection by assiduous mortification; without which, it gradually precipitates into the most ruinous and shameful extravagances and crimes. And it is the duty of a Christian not only to guard himself against great excesses, but also to correct all the abuses of every action, and to give it the entire perfection which virtue and religion prescribe. Now, there is no action in life more subject to disorders than that of eating and drinking, as our own experience must make us sensible; consequently there is none, in which there is a greater necessity of practising continually the holy virtue of temperance. This is so much allowed by all, that in common we call this simply and absolutely temperance, as its most necessary and daily act, though, to our disgrace and shame, it is the most transgressed. Christians forget that their bodies are holy, consecrated to God, living temples of his divine Spirit, and sully them with brutish excesses. They forget that the dignity of a rational creature raises man above the slavery of his sensual appetites, and so far degrade themselves as to run after them. They forget that they are born for heaven and spiritual joys; and by their carnal desires make themselves incapable of them, nay, make themselves earthly and carnal. They forget even God himself, and the spiritual homage which they owe to him, to drown themselves in their senses. They forget the cross of Christ, by which they were redeemed, in which they profess to believe, and call themselves his followers, while, in practice, they are apostates from it, and walk enemies to it: "whose end is eternal damnation, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is their shame; who mind earthly things," as St. Paul says of such, Phil. iii. 18, 19. Their conversation ought to be in heaven, and their hearts spiritual; but by their appetites, they grovel on the earth, not raising themselves above beasts, nay, abusing their reason, buried in their lusts, degrading themselves far beneath them, wallowing in excesses, of which nature makes the brutes incapable; making their basest part, their bellies, their

divinity; and giving their main attention to satisfy their corruptible flesh in its basest desires, to the disgrace not only of religion, but of human nature itself. The greater part of mankind forget their reason, and what they are capable of, their God and religion, and the end for which they received their being, to drown and lose their nobler part, and their superior faculties, and to live as if they had no other employment, no other errand on earth, than to pamper and fatten their bodies. Am I of this ignoble number—this reproach of the creation?*

2. We must eat to repair and maintain the strength of our bodies, that we may be able to perform the functions and duties of life, and the employment of our station, to the honour of God. The action, then, is natural and necessary; but it must be referred to God's glory, and performed in a manner worthy of so great an intention. "Whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God."—1 Cor. x. 31. As it proceeds from concupiscible appetite, it easily contracts some of its poisonous qualities. Nature has annexed a pleasure to it for a good end; but concupiscence, or the inordinate desire of the pleasure of the senses, is easily caught by this bait. It is a spark by which that irregular appetite is in great danger of being set in a flame, and nothing but a perfect habit of the mortification of this sense, and of watching over it, can secure us from this danger. "Whereas health is the end of eating and drinking, a dangerous pleasure joins itself as an attendant," says St. Aug. (Conf., B. 10, c. 31, n. 2), "and it generally seeks to go before, and to make me do that for its sake, which I either say I do or desire to do for health." Though this pleasure, in what is taken for necessity and with a pious attention, be good and lawful; "the weakness of our body standing in need not only of meat, but also of the taste of meat," as St. Aug. says (l. 4, cont. Jul., c. 14, n. 67, t. 10, p. 616,); yet it is dangerous unless we watch ourselves; for it is apt to make us eat for its sake, or to set our hearts upon it; or to exceed in quantity or in the manner of eating; insomuch, that we may look upon our meals as usually the most dangerous action of the day. Yet Christian temperance teaches us to retrench all their defects, and by what means we are to sanctify them.

3. Intemperance is a vice, against which the greatest and most mortified servants of God are always obliged to arm themselves. Even in the state of innocence, this was the gate through which

* "Nos numerus sumus, et fruges consumere nati."—Virg.

sin entered into our first parents; the devil knew no more alluring bait than this, joined with pride, to overthrow man in his state of original purity, nor did it fail him. When he admired the invincible virtue of the Son of God himself on earth, and presumed to attempt an assault upon him, it was by this temptation that he began to assail him. The most perfect men in all virtue, the holy fathers of the desert, never thought themselves secure from this vice; and therefore, to be more remote from its attacks, studied to make their nourishment as insipid, and even painful, as possible, thus to cut off the occasions, which the enemy might use as engines to tempt them with. The great St. Augustine, after his conversion, declares, that, though he had broken the chains of his other passions, and found himself at rest from them, he still had strenuous and dangerous struggles to maintain against intemperance. "In these temptations," says he, "I strive daily against the inordinate appetites of eating and drinking; and who is there, O Lord! who is not some little drawn beside the bounds of necessity? Whosoever he be, he is a great man; let him magnify thy name. I am not such a one, because I am a sinful man."*

4. The Fathers lay it down as a rule, that the first step to mortification and virtue is a vigorous opposition to this passion; and that, as long as a man has not begun this work, he has not so much as entered the lists. The reason is, because intemperance and sensuality clog the soul, and wed her affections to the earth in such a manner, that she is not capable of heavenly sentiments. She is such as her affections are, beastly and immersed in the senses. Instead of commanding the body, she makes it her tyrannical master, and delights herself in its base gratifications. Whence our Saviour says: "Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be overcharged with intemperance."—Luke, xxi. 34. Thus the immortification of the palate is the death of all virtues and spiritual affections; whence St. Gregory the Great (l. 30, c. 26) says: "No one obtains the trophy of any spiritual victory, who has not first overcome the appetites of the flesh by the mortification of the belly. Whilst this is not restrained, all virtues are overwhelmed and destroyed together by the concupiscence of the flesh." And St. Isidore (l. de Sum. Bono, l. 2, c. 22): "No one can attain the perfection of virtue, unless he has first mastered

* "Quisquis est, magnus est; magnificet nomen tuum. Ego autem non sum, quia peccator homo sum."—Conf., l. 10, c. 31, n. 6.

the passion of gluttony." Therefore, St. Basil (l. de Vera Virgin.) orders the virgin, whom he is leading to virtue, to begin by temperance, before all other things, to tame the desires of this vice.

5. Men's virtue being interior, and residing in their hearts, is invisible; but we have an exterior mark of it; for their temperance and abstemiousness, where nothing else belies its sincerity, shows their inward mastery over all their appetites, and how far they are advanced in true virtue. As long as simplicity, integrity, honesty, and other moral virtues reigned in the world, so long plainness and temperance were the character of the ages, as is visible from the manners of the ancient patriarchs. The wisest legislators thought no precautions too great to put an eternal bar to the entrance of luxury, being very sensible how close and necessary a connexion there is between sobriety and all other virtues; and so long did these commonwealths stand and flourish, as these wholesome laws were rigorously observed. Witness the remarkable severity of the Lacedemonians; witness the Persian empire and the commonwealths of Greece and Rome. And if we look narrowly into the histories of all nations and kingdoms, we shall see visibly that luxury and gluttony immediately open a wide gate to all vices, and to an entire corruption of heart. Hence our Divine legislator exacts so strict and eminent a temperance and sobriety in all his followers, and inculcated these precepts so strongly, not only by words, but still more by example. For this he led a poor, mortified, and suffering life in hunger, thirst, cold, &c. When fatigued from his journeys, he begs only a little water of the Samaritan woman; and this only to have an occasion of converting her from her evil courses; nor do we read that he drank of it. When on the cross, he tasted gall and vinegar. And all the saints tread in the same path, from St. John Baptist, in his wilderness, down to the end of time, whoever desires to enrol their names among his true disciples. "They, that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh with the vices and concupiscences."—Gal. v. 24.

6. Divines, with St. Gregory the Great, usually assign five ways of sinning by gluttony, viz.:—by eating out of the due times of regularity and decency; or, too daintily; or, too much; or, greedily; or, with too great nicety in the cookery. Temperance is armed against each temptation with particular remedies. Against the first, temperance must prescribe certain regular times in the day for meals. In the more early ages, before luxury had

enervated the minds and bodies of men, custom made all persons content themselves with one meal a-day, in the evening, and that on simple plain diet. The laws of the Lacedemonians severely forbade any one to eat in private; even the kings, unless with leave of the Ephori, a kind of censors, on the first night after their return from some notable victory, were obliged to sup in public with the people on a black soup and other coarse fare. Though nature be still the same, customs are much altered, and the habits of men, by a contrary use, are now very different. However, to make but one hearty meal a day is certainly most agreeable to nature; many specious reasons are alleged by learned men in preference of supper with regard to robust, healthy persons; but dinner must be necessarily chosen by all of weak constitutions, or rather that every meal be but a light refection in proportion as the weakness of nature can bear in them. Regularity in the times of meals, and that they be not thrown late into the night, are points very conducive to health and agreeable to nature. This, then, ought to be prescribed by temperance. And it is a part of this virtue to be exact to these hours, as far as circumstances and a reasonable liberality will permit; also, not to eat or drink easily out of them; not to anticipate them without necessity; not to suffer the mind to run upon them before; not to run to the kitchen, or be solicitous in inquiring what is for dinner. "Wo to thee, O land! whose princes eat in the morning. Blessed is the land, whose princes eat in their time."—Eccl. x. 16, 17. We shall leave our appetite quite ungoverned and without restraint, unless we accustom it to fast without murmuring at its regular meals.

7. Another object of temperance is, not to seek dainties. The ancients, in the ages of simplicity and nature, never in their banquets prepared more than one thing, and that simple and plain. If they would do honour to a king or noble guest, the distinction was to set before him not a variety of dishes, to tempt his appetite, but a whole joint or a double portion. Thus Abraham, himself a great prince, treated angels and princes with a single dish, such as a fresh cake baked on the embers, or a boiled kid. When Saul was treated in his inauguration banquet, Samuel ordered a shoulder of meat to be set before him. 1 Kings, ix. 34.

It was luxury that invented a variety of viands on the same table. This was the first remarkable step, amongst the Persians, Grecians, and Romans, of their degeneracy from the frugality and

temperance, and soon after, by a necessary fatal consequence, from all the virtues of their ancestors.

It is a second transgression of this virtue, to prepare costly meats, or to be nice and curious in the search of extraordinary rarities. When we consider the extravagant prices of the acipenser (sturgeon) and the thynnus (tunny-fish) among the Romans, we perceive the highest symptoms of luxury, vanity, and sensuality portending the downfall of their greatness and virtue, which followed upon the heels of these vices. Custom has allowed, and even made necessary, a certain variety of dishes, and a distinction in the choice, in proportion to persons' rank in the world; and that is decent in one, which would be extravagance in another. But, some meats are too expensive, or cost too much search, to be ever allowed on any table without a crime. Food ought not to employ so many hands, so much time, or so much money. Christian temperance, however, allows a moderate decency in tables, according to the distinction established by the order of the world; but, in this it leans to be as sparing as may be with decency, and to shun all danger of the common temptations of luxury and sensuality, knowing that the superfluities of the rich are necessary to the poor, and due to them, though they be ever so great. A much stricter abstemiousness is necessary in those who have renounced the world.

Charity advises that we should remit a little of our ordinary severity on certain occasions, to entertain strangers, when it is suitable that we should do so. Likewise, perhaps, that we sometimes dine at great tables or feasts, though modesty and many other virtues require our being reserved, and as backward as may be in frequenting them. Our Lord himself was pleased to sanctify a marriage feast with his presence, and assisted sometimes at the tables of the rich. Nor does the vice of intemperance consist so much in what we eat, as in the affection and sensuality with which we eat. And it is the best rule to eat what is set before us, or what seems most wholesome and best for us, or at least without any great attention to the taste.

8. Nicety in the dressing and cookery of the meat is still a greater fault of intemperance. Nature has dealt with man in a very different manner from other animals. They find their food ready provided for them, and are taught by instinct alone where to seek it. Man is to produce his by labour and toil, and afterwards to prepare it by dressing. God has given him for his nourishment not only the produce of the land, but, at least since

the Deluge, man's life and strength being impaired, and herbs and legumes having probably lost much of their salutary and strengthening qualities, also the fishes of the sea, the birds of the air, and the flesh of beasts, wild and tame. Yet not content with this bounty, he employs all his reason to create to himself by art a new and forced unnatural diet. Nature points out nothing but simple and plain cookery, with no other seasoning than what is likewise simple, as of salt, oil, or the like. This was the practice not only of the golden age of innocence, but of those which first succeeded it, the frugality of which still maintained something of the simplicity of nature, but of which the very memory now seems almost blotted out of men's minds. St. Clemens of Alexandria deplores, that cooks were become in greater esteem than gardeners and country-labourers, l. 2, c. 1.

All our rich sauces, jumbling different meats into one dish, high-seasoned or very rich foods, with the whole class of viands, which are only the produce of a refined study, and of the elaborate, infamous art of luxury (for such is modern cookery), are very opposite to nature, health, and virtue. To health; for they pall the stomach, hinder instead of promoting easy digestion, and wear and corrode the very organs of the taste, which sense they stupefy and destroy, making it incapable of finding any relish in the plain food for which nature framed it. The mischiefs they create within the bowels are still far greater, where they corrode the tender vessels, obstruct the passages, corrupt the fluids, inflame the whole body, and fill it in many parts together with the seeds of innumerable diseases. Temperance prescribes the plainest meats and most simple sauces, that custom will allow at tables, and chooses for itself such nourishment; not eating to provoke an appetite, to create to itself an irregular one, or to gratify an inordinate one; but to support necessary health and strength. One of the best sayings recorded of the Cynic philosopher is that, "Let my enemies live on dainties."*

9. Excess in eating is always a dangerous temptation; and we easily slide into this fault. The pleasure which accompanies this action easily deceives us, and draws us beyond the strict bounds of what is necessary, and often without our perceiving it, whilst we indulge ourselves under a pretext of necessity, when this is but self-illusion. We find we have transgressed in this article, if after meals we feel a heaviness or dulness in our spirits,

* Diog. Laert., l. 6. in Diogene.

or a load or indigestion in our stomachs through the quantity which we have taken; or that hence our sleep is not sound; or that we are, after our meals, less fit for our duties, either in mind or body.

All excess in eating both stupefies the soul and hurts the health of the body. It overcharges the stomach, impedes its action in digestion, and produces filthy gross humours, which hinder a free circulation, and the full play of the lungs, obstruct the smaller vessels, and carry disorders into every organ. What is excess every one is best judge for his own constitution. The quantity, under this transgression, which is necessary for the body, does not consist in an invisible point; those who are for carrying it so far will be sure to exceed. If we desire not to offend, and to preserve the virtue of temperance, we must be sure to keep ourselves always under and at a distance from the extremity, subtracting from our bodies in proportion as our less fatigue and exercise may require less refection; a rule very requisite for our health as well as for virtue.

As there is a particular danger of gluttony at extraordinary times of merriment, whoever assists on such occasions must be well armed with good resolutions to touch only few things, and to let nothing engage him to exceed his limited bounds. He will find a present advantage in the testimony of innocence, in the victory over himself, and in the health, good temper, and ease both of mind and body, which will follow. "In much meat is sickness."—Eccl. xxxvii. 33. "The sleep of health in the temperate man.—Eccl. xxxi. 24.

It is a precept often repeated in St. Jerome's Epistles, and in the rules of the ancient ascetics, always to leave off a meal whilst a person has still an appetite. At least he that proposes to himself to eat as much as he can, certainly commits excess.

10. The fifth and last danger which temperance is to guard against is greediness. To eat solely for pleasure is always a sin, as St. Gregory (Mor. l. 30, c. 13 et 14) and St. Austin (l. 4. contr. Jul. c. 14; l. de Mor. Eccl., c. 21) proves, as it is an act of sensuality and against the end of nature. Whence Pope Innocent XI. condemned this proposition (n. 8): "To eat and drink to satiety for pleasure alone is no sin." To eat with pleasure is noways to be censured, on condition it be referred to the ends which nature and God prescribe, viz., his will and honour, and our life and strength.

In eating, it is the affection which makes the sin, not what is

eaten. As St. Augustine writes (l. 3. de Doct. Chr., c. 12): "The wise man may use the most precious meat without any vice of gluttony or concupiscence; and the fool may be inflamed with the basest gluttony for the vilest." And St. Gregory says (Mor. l. 30, c. 18, l. 27): "Not the meat, but the appetite, is in the fault. We often take more dainty food without sin, yet fall into gluttony in the meanest. Esau's greediness was for a mess of pottage." The devil tempted Christ only with bread.

Against this most ordinary fault of intemperance, we must carefully guard our interior, not eating as gluttons do, greedy to relish the savour of the meat, or eager in seeking it; but rather treating it with indifference. 2ndly, We must always be content in mind with our food, receiving it with thanksgiving to God its author, never murmuring at it, never desiring other more palatable meats, as the Israelites did in the desert, repining at their manna, and longing for the flesh-pots of Egypt. Exod. xvi. Our nourishment is from the bountiful hand of God, no less than theirs was. The best method to preserve ourselves from this vice, and to practise holy temperance, is for us to receive more palatable meats only when offered, and with an inward reluctance, and a desire rather of mortifying ourselves in refusing them, and choosing the more unsavoury meats if left to ourselves. We must also strictly observe the rules of exterior modesty, decency, and temperance in our meals, and observe those precepts, which it was not beneath the divine oracle to dictate to us: "Be not greedy in any banquet, and do not fall on all the meats."—Eccl. xxxvi; 32. "Use as a rational man those things which are set before thee; lest, whilst thou eatest much, thou shouldst be hated."—Eccl. xxxi. 19. "Leave off for discipline sake;" v. 20. "And if thou sittest in the midst of many, extend not thy hand first, nor ask to drink first."—Ib. 21. We must not eat in a voracious manner, or too fast. Meat, without a slow and perfect trituration, can never be digested in the stomach. We ought never to talk of our hunger, or of the taste of meats, &c.

A fear of these dangers made several saints study to make their meals a mortification and a cross. Let us at least approach our meal only as physic for the necessity of our bodies. "Thou hast taught me this, O Lord! that I approach to take my food, as to a physic. For as medicines are not to be taken to fill, but for the health of the body, so food is not to be taken to satiety, but only for the necessity and support of the same body," says St. Augustine, Conf., l. 10, c. 31. If we feel a vehement desire

for any particular meat or dish, we should make it a rule to abstain from it.

11. As our meals are a daily and necessary, yet dangerous action, we must be very attentive and careful to consecrate them to God, by making them occasions of a continual victory over ourselves, and the ensnaring passion of gluttony. For this end we must never approach them without raising our hearts to God, by a short oblation of ourselves, and prayer, by which, not in bare words, but in the earnest affections of our soul, we beg his Divine Majesty to bestow his benediction on our food, that it may conduce to our corporal nourishment for his service, remembering gratefully that it is his bountiful gift; and likewise to impart his holy blessing to us, that we may take this food in a manner which may be for his divine honour, and for the sanctification of our own souls. This intention should be sometimes privately renewed in our hearts during the meal.

Our food is the special gift of God, as the royal prophet says, Ps. ciii. 27: "All expect from thee, that thou give them meat." And Ps. cxliv. 15, 16: "The eyes of all hope in thee, O Lord! and thou givest their food in convenient time. Thou openest thy hand, and fillest every living creature with thy benediction." Therefore, we begin and close every meal with giving hearty thanks to God for these his gifts. "The merciful and compassionate Lord has renewed a remembrance of his wondrous works; he has given meat to those that fear him."—Ps. cx. 4.

Also as temperance or victory over ourselves is a particular gift of God's grace, we must humbly ask it of him. The Holy Ghost teaches us to pray for it by the mouth of the inspired son of Sirach: "Take from me the concupiscence of the belly."—Eccl. xxiii. 6. St. Augustine testifies how earnestly he made it his petition, speaking of the temptations of gluttony in eating: "I daily labour to resist these temptations, and I invoke, O my Lord! thy right hand to my salvation; and I refer my struggles to thee." Hence, the tradition of all ages has established a sacred benediction before and after meals, which is easy to trace up to the earliest times; and all the ritual books of Christians and Jews contain formulas of doing it. Can we sufficiently lament the irreligion of this age, when we see this solemn and sacred custom totally forgotten at several great tables; or performed in a negligent, unthinking manner by many, who exteriorly observe it. Such persons go to meals worse than asses and mules, who have no understanding or knowledge of God.

12. In the choice of what we eat, the best rule is to receive indifferently what is set before us, and to let others to whom it belongs help us, as they judge best. If it be our province to carve in company, even good manners oblige us to help others with the choicest pieces. If we must choose for ourselves, let us do it without any greediness for anything. If we feel such a temptation, it will be very advantageous to refuse it to ourselves; at least we are bound to correct that appetite and intention. It is a counsel advisable for perfection, to choose what we least like; it is necessary even for good manners that we show no niceness in our choice, nor complain of the meals or dressing, or talk fondly of them. "If the bread next you be too hard, too soft, or other than what you like, eat it rather, because it is less agreeable to sensuality;" is the advice of St. Vincent Ferrerius (de Vit. Spir., c. 3); *i. e.*, if this be done without affectation, or being observed by others; which, in the first place, must be avoided in all self-denials. At least, if we desire to keep our appetites under command, we should accustom them to obedience by frequent little cheerful refusals in our meals, chiefly as to those things which are less wholesome for us. We must also, for the sake of virtue and God, forego whatever may be favourable to sensuality. This will be a victory over our domestic enemy, and an acceptable sacrifice for our good angel to present before Almighty God. Let every one take here such resolutions as best suit his circumstances and necessities. But to eat without any denials would be to abandon ourselves to an ungovernable appetite, and to make it soon become our master. Particularly we must be watchful against all excesses. "Sleep is sweet to him that works, whether he eat little or much; but the fulness of the rich man does not suffer him to sleep."—Eccl. v. 11.

13. To draw our attention from the pleasure of the taste, it is a good method to be employed at meals in listening a little to some pious reading, or, at least, in some improving, innocent entertainment or conversation; or sometimes, with short private ejaculations in the heart, to reflect in what manner Christ our Lord was pleased to drink gall and vinegar in his bitter passion, and to suffer hunger and thirst in his laborious journies to teach men his saving truths; or how many poor are almost perishing with hunger; or how great our misery is in this our banishment to be subject to these necessities of the body, whilst the blessed in heaven feed in spirit on the contemplation of the immortal Deity, the true bread of life; or how penitential or mortified

the lives of the saints were on earth; or on the precept of our holy religion: "That we make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences."—Rom. xiii. 14.

14. Temperance in drinking is still of greater importance than in eating. First, because the pleasure and allurements to it are often greater. Secondly, because excesses in it are far more enormous, and their consequences also more fatal. Thirdly, because it is still more destructive of wisdom and virtue, and of every good disposition in the heart. Whence it was commanded in the Old Law, that all who consecrated themselves to God should always refrain from wine, and all liquors that could inebriate. Num. vi. 2.

Under thirty years of age, in the heat of youth, all persons ought to abstain from wine and all strong liquors, which are not useful for them, even in a small or moderate quantity, to give force and action to their spirits and organs, of themselves inclined to be too vehement. Whence young persons usually have not an inclination to them from nature, although they may create it in themselves, which is a frequent unhappy case.

Again, this abstinence is indispensable in that age for the preservation of chastity. St. Jerome and several other ancients are extremely severe and inexorable in this article; and that in countries where there was no other drink but wine and water. If this cannot be entirely observed, let it be attended to as much as possible.

Wine drunk with moderation gives vigour and activity to the spirits and motion to the vessels, which assists nature and is conducive to strength and health in lax habits of body; and good wine is the best cordial known in nature. "Wine was created from the beginning for cheerfulness, and not for drunkenness. Wine drunk temperately is joy of the soul and heart. Sober drink is health to the mind and body."—Eccl. xxxi. 35, 36, 37. It agrees not with bodies already too vigorous, or in the heat of youth, or under any feverish disposition. But to assist the action of the fibres when too languid, and invigorate nature when too feeble for her necessary functions, and where there is no danger of obstructions or a fever, one or two small glasses are serviceable towards the end of dinner, especially to persons advanced in years. But as wine is no diluter, and does not help digestion otherwise than indirectly by increasing the action of the stomach and vessels, if persons advanced in years make it their usual drink at meals, even health requires its being mixed with water.

Taking much wine, though to no excess, is always more prejudicial than serviceable. Physicians justly applaud that maxim of the great Sir William Temple: "I take one glass myself, a second for a friend; but if I took a third, it would be for my enemy."

Water is, undoubtedly, allowed by all physicians to be the best digester in nature, as it is both the best diluter and the best dissolvent, consisting of the most penetrating particles, and being the aptest of all vehicles. If it has once passed the fire, the insects it swarms with in certain seasons will be killed, and its chilliness removed. The smallest drink is usually the best for digestion, unless a too relaxed habit, as in case of a dropsy, forbid it. Hence the ancients, even the heroes before battle, were chiefly water-drinkers, as Pope observes upon Homer; and when the Grecians used wine, they usually mixed three parts of water to one of wine, as Cooke shows from Menander and Hesiod, in his notes upon the latter. Op. et Dier., B. 2, v. 284, p. 204. Yet the whim of those, who, barely for health, would reduce all men to drink only simple water, is as extravagant as that other of the same gentlemen, viz., that the most wholesome way of living is to eat nothing but herbs, in which the fibres are so closely knit as to be hardly soluble, unless by vigorous stomachs. The best rule for health, in this respect, is to allow a certain latitude and variety in plain food, avoiding what is unwholesome either in itself, or relatively to each particular constitution and habit of body, but without any strict slavery to one particular kind of diet; a fault to be shunned, were it only for this inconvenience, that a body long accustomed to so strict a regimen, could never once vary from it without great danger; as those who, *e. g.*, for an asthma, should have accustomed themselves long to drink everything warm, could never touch any cold drink.

All persons ought to set themselves certain rules as to the most moderate use of strong drink, according to their constitution and circumstances; never to seek curious or rare wines; never to talk nicely or much of their goodness or flavour; never to drink more than what nature requires, and on all occasions to keep within the strict rules of sobriety and decency. It is a good advice and a proper abstinence never to drink anything out of meals, unless obliged by some extraordinary occasion.

O my soul! embrace holy temperance, the mother of so many and so great advantages, and the extirpatress of passion; a

virtue most essential to every soldier of Christ. The more perfectly gluttony and intemperance are subdued, so much the weaker will all the other enemies be made, and their assaults more easy to be overcome. But, if I suffer myself to be vanquished at home, how can I hope to overcome foreign enemies?

An experienced physician thus addresses temperance with regard to bodily health: "O temperance! thou source of human bliss, far exceeding our praise and admiration! the glory and security of the first age of the world, which, for thy sake alone, was accounted golden! the principal and last promoter of real comfort and composure, of serenity of mind and body. Thou crownest us with length of years, health, and pleasure, with a countenance cheerful and amiable, with limbs brisk and active. Thy gifts extort applause from thy enemies, and the most intemperate," &c.

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON ABSTINENCE AND FASTING.

Abstinence is a virtue retrenching and moderating the quality of our food, through a spirit of temperance and penance. Thus entirely to abstain from wine may be a temperance agreeable to God, and a means to make our souls better disposed to receive wisdom and virtue. "I thought in my heart," said Solomon, "to withdraw my flesh from wine, that I might transfer my mind to wisdom and shun folly."—Eccl. ii. 3. The Holy Ghost commends the obedience of the Rechabites to the precept of their father Jonadab, never to touch wine. Jer. xxxv. 18. Daniel with his companions abstained from wine. Dan. i. and x. So did John Baptist, by the instinct of the Holy Ghost; Luke, i. 15. Timothy observed this rule, so as to oblige St. Paul to order him a little moderation, on account of his sicknesses and weak stomach. Eusebius relates the same austerity of St. James of Jerusalem, and of the first Christians of Alexandria, under St. Mark. St. Augustine commends it as the practice of many bishops, priests, and monks, in his time; l. de Mor. Eccl., c. 30. St. Jerome, in his letter to Eustochium, says: "If I have any credit to give advice, if my experience can be believed, I, in the first place, admonish and conjure that the spouse of Christ fly all wine as a poison." Indeed the heathen Romans allowed no young persons under thirty to drink wine, as it is an incentive of the passions.*

* Ælian, Hist. Var. 1, 10, c. 9. Alex. ab. Alex. Gen. Dier., &c.

And St. Clemens of Alexandria (Pædag., l. 2, c. 2) advises to drink water, and fly wine as the threats of a fire, adding: "Let young persons of either sex be particularly abstemious; for it is no way proper to allow wine to that boiling age, which is to add fire to fire, from which raging desires and burning passions are kindled." What has been now observed of the use of wine is equally applicable to the abstaining, at least on certain times, from some meats or sorts of food of too nutritious a nature.

But as to abstinence and fasting, several Protestant writers agree with us in their writings, though not in practice. Dr. Weston, late famous Bishop of Exeter, in his sermon on Mortification, t. 2, having observed, that we are to practise it in our meals two ways, by retrenching certain foods in them or by abstinence, and by retrenching the meals themselves or by fasting, adds, that every one ought to have times set to comply with this duty, and laments it is so little practised on the days appointed by their Church for it; which rubrick, at least, is an admonition that every one is bound to have some times allotted to it. See "The Whole Duty of Man," &c.

DISCOURSE LIV.

ON VIRGINITY.

1. MAN, in the state of innocence, was exempt from the sting of concupiscence, and from the domestic war of his own will or members. But no sooner had our first parents forfeited the grace of God by their rebellion and disobedience, than they experienced this revolt within themselves, which they confessed by blushing to see themselves naked. Christ, by redeeming us, obtained for us the graces, by which we are made victorious over our spiritual enemies, if we ourselves are not wanting in corresponding to them. By his grace, therefore, concupiscence is always subject to our reason, and it is always in our power to refuse our consent to its suggestions. "However the appetite shall be subject to thee, and thou shalt command it."*—Gen. iv. Our victory over this enemy is a virtue, which renders us worthy of God, and pure and holy in his eyes. Its chiefest and most heroic part is holy

* Verumtamen sub te erit appetitus ejus, et tu dominaberis illius.

chastity, or the virtue which governs or restrains lust. That passion is the foulest, and at the same time the most furious of all the depraved inclinations which the corruption of sin hath planted in our nature; and a steady virtue hath much to do to keep itself untainted by it, and from being overthrown by its own weakness on that side. It is engrafted in our very frame and constitution; it is fomented and put in a flame upon every small occasion, and by every spark of a temptation; and it breaks out many times with a violence, which borders upon fury, and requires the utmost watchfulness and vigour to restrain it. But the baser and more furious this enemy is, the more excellent is the virtue of chastity, by which it is overcome. "O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory! for the memory thereof is immortal; because it is known both with God and with men."—Wisd. iv. 1. "It triumpheth crowned for ever, winning the reward of undefiled conflicts."—Ib. v. 2. "No price is worthy of a continent soul."—Eccles. xxvi. 20. If any ask why God hath subjected mankind to so perpetual, so importunate, so vexatious a warfare, he will remember that it is left for the trial of our fidelity, since our first disobedience, and for an occasion of victories and crowns.

2. Continency is divided into three kinds: that of the married state, that of widowhood, and that of virginity. Matrimony is a holy and honourable state, and obliges all persons engaged in it to converse together in sanctity and purity. "That every one of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honour; not in the passion of lust, like the Gentiles that know not God."—1 Thess. iv. 4, 5. Any impurity not referred to the lawful end of that state, is a more grievous crime before God than if it were committed by those who are single; and intemperance in that which is lawful is always a venial sin. Even the use of marriage is not exempt from a venial sin, if pleasure be the only end. It is an error condemned by Innocent XI. prop. 9: "The marriage right, exercised with a view to pleasure only, is exempt from all venial fault and defect."* The lawful ends are either for the sake of posterity, or to comply with the request of the other party; which obstinately to refuse, especially out of anger, would be a mortal sin against justice. 1 Cor. vii. Or lastly, to seek by it a remedy against the temptation of concupiscence.

* Opus conjugii ob solam voluptatem exercitum omni penitus caret culpa et defectu veniali.

The ancient Canons and the Fathers frequently repeat the old ecclesiastical precept, which commanded married persons to observe continency on all festivals, fast-days, in Lent, and on the day before they received any sacrament: though Azor, Bonacina, Pontas, &c., say that precept has no longer the force of a law, yet all exhort married persons to observe it from the spirit of the Church, and a kind of natural decency. St. Charles Borroméo orders them to be put in mind of it; and St. Paul advises it for times of devotion. 1 Cor. vii. 5. Hence this virtue has generally its difficulty also in the married state. "This difficulty is so great, that many find it easier never to know a woman, than to observe moderation, and to act only for the sake of children."* St. Aug. l. de Bono Conjugii, c. 13. Sir Thomas More testifies, that he found the conflict against this passion more difficult in marriage than he had in his youth; which Bourdaloue also shows often to happen. The continency of the widowhood requires nearly the same laws with that of virginity; and its conflict is often more difficult.

3. Virginity is a perpetual integrity of mind and body exempt from all carnal defilement. Christ ennobled this virtue as an illustrious fruit of his incarnation, and recommended it to those who have the courage for, and a call to, so excellent a state. Matt. xix. 11. "There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven." Upon which passage Dr. Wells owns that Christ declares voluntary chastity for the kingdom of heaven's sake to be an excellence, and an excellent state of life (Paraphr. on St. Matthew, p. 185); though he pretends that all have not this gift in their power. But if any have it not, it is because they do not seek it, nor use the means to obtain it. "It is given to those who wish, who ask, who endeavour to obtain it. For it shall be given to all who ask it, and it shall be found by him who seeks it."—St. Jerome in Matt. l. 3, t. 4, part 1, p. 87, ed. Ben. The same does St. Chrysostom teach at large in expounding this same text. Tertullian writes (l. de Monog. near the end): "If you cannot, it is because you will not. For he shows you can if you will, because he leaves both to your choice." St. Gregory Naz., Or. 31: "It is given to those who will, and who assent." St. Austin says to

* Hoc tam magnum est ut multi homines facilius se tota vita ab omni concubitu abstineant, quam modum teneant non coeundi nisi prolis causa, si matrimonio copulentur.

God: "You would give continence, if I asked it." See Origen in Matt. 19. St. Ambrose, l. 3. de Virgin, et l. de Viduis. Auctor oper. imperf. in Matt. 19.

4. "I would that all men were even as myself; but every man hath his proper gift from God; one after this manner, and another after that. But I say to the unmarried, and to the widow, it is good for them so to continue even as I."—1 Cor. vii. 7, 8. "Concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord, but I give counsel, as having mercy of the Lord to be faithful."—v. 25. "Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife."—v. 27. "But if thou take a wife, thou hast not sinned. And if a virgin marry she hath not sinned; nevertheless, such shall have tribulation of the flesh. But I spare you."—v. 28. "I would have you be without solicitude. He that is without a wife is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God. But he that is with a wife is solicitous for the things of this world, and is divided."—v. 32, 33. "He that giveth his virgin in marriage, doth well; and he that giveth her not, doth better."—v. 38. He indeed saith, it is better to marry than to burn with lust, viz., if a person will not use other remedies against lust. And he calls virginity a gift of God; but so he does of the continency of the married, and of widows. And the Wise Man: "I knew that I could not otherwise be continent, unless God gave it; and this also was a point of wisdom, to know whose gift it was."—Wisd. viii. 21.

5. "I beheld, and lo! a Lamb stood on mount Sion, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand having his name, and the name of his Father written on their foreheads."—Rev. xiv. 1. "And they sang as it were a new canticle before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and the ancients; and no man could say the canticle, but those hundred and forty-four thousand, who were purchased from the earth. These are they who were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb, whithersoever he goeth. These were purchased from among men, the first fruits of God, and to the Lamb. They are without spot before the throne of God."—v. 3, 4, 5. They are called the first fruits, to express, in the Hebrew phrase, that they are the inheritance properly consecrated to God. Upon this passage St. Austin exclaims: "Whither do you think this Lamb is going, since no one dares, no one is able to follow him, besides the virgins? Into what pastures, what meadows is he going? He will find joys and pleasures such as this vain, deceitful world does

not afford, such as are not found even in heaven but by virgins. The blessed shall all enjoy Christ, but still in a manner not like the virgins." St. Augustine, l. de Sancta Virginit., c. 27, t. 6, p. 354, ed. Ben.: "Take care, while it is in your power, not to lose the gift of virginity, which, once lost, can never be recovered. The rest of the world shall see you following the Lamb; they shall see you without envy, and with joy, because what they possess not themselves they will enjoy in you. They will not be able to sing your new canticle, but they will hear and be delighted with it. Yours will be the happier lot."—Ib., c. 29, p. 355.

6. The works of all the primitive Fathers are filled with the highest encomiums of this virtue, and many of them have written whole books on this subject. St. Methodius, a most learned and holy bishop of Tyre, and martyr, A.D. 290, whose eloquence, extraordinary erudition, and virtue are much extolled by St. Jerome, St. Epiphanius, Photius, &c., wrote his banquet of virgins, or dialogue between ten holy virgins, in praise of this virtue, in which he writes: "Virginity is a great and glorious virtue; the fairest flower of the Church of God. Chastity is granted to few men, and is surrounded with dangers proportioned to his high extraction."—Or. 1, p. 6.

St. Cyprian says of virgins: "They are the finest flowers of the Christian Church, the fairest ornaments of a spiritual life, the surest and most lasting proof of honour and virtue, the nearest resemblance of the sanctity of God and the family of Christ. In them the Church boasts her glorious fecundity; and every increase in the number of virgins brings an addition to her joy and satisfaction."—l. de Habitu Virginum. See St. Austin, l. de Virginitate, t. 6, ed. Ben. St. Chrysostom, l. de Virginitate, t. 1, p. 275, ed. Ben. St. Athanasius, Ep. Canonica ad Amm., ed. Bevereg., t. 1, p. 37, et l. de Virginit. St. Basil, l. de Vera Virginitate.

7. The Fathers extol this holy virtue and state. First, because it is the peculiar institution and fruit of the incarnation of the Son of God. "The Author of purity delights in all things clean; he chose a pure virgin for his mother; he loved his virgin disciple more than the rest; he is seen by the clean of heart, and he is possessed by the clean in body."—St. Thomas de Villanova, Serm. 3. de Sacr. Altar. And he who chose a virgin mother, a virgin precursor, and a virgin for his beloved disciple, inspired his Church to admit only virgins to serve his altar, and to consecrate his spotless virgin body. Even in the Old Law continency was com-

manded before holy duties. Exod. xix. 15. 1 Sam. xxi. 4. Zach. vii. 4. 1 Cor. vii. 5. Pope Innocent gives this reason for the law of chastity in priests: "Because they are occupied in the daily ministry; for no day passes in which they do not offer the divine sacrifice, or baptize."—Ep. 2. ad Victr. Rotom. "As soon as the Son of God came into the world, he instituted a new family, that being adored by angels in heaven he might have other angels on earth."—St. Jerome, Ep. 18. ad Eustoch. p. 38. t. 4, ed. Ben.

Secondly, because it makes men spiritual, and angels upon earth. "The angels do not marry. No more does the virgin. They are always employed in the presence and in the service of God. So is the virgin. Hence St. Paul exempts her from all care. Virginity makes mortals resemble and equal the angels themselves."—St. Chrysostom. l. de Virgin., t. 1, p. 276, ed. Ben. On this account the saints in heaven are said to resemble the angels. "At the resurrection they shall neither marry, nor be given in marriage, but shall be like unto the angels."—Matt. xxii. Purity produces this likeness on earth, and in this exceeds the angels, that it maintains its advantage against the most violent enemy, and by triumphing over the allurements of pleasure. "Upon serious consideration virginity will be found not only to equal but to surpass the angels. Virgins clothed in flesh fight valiantly, and conquer a nature which the angels have not. Virginity is a long childhood, and a triumph over voluptuousness."—Auctor vetus, l. de Pudicitia, inter op. S. Cypriani, p. 428, ed. Pam.

Thirdly, it makes men bear a nearer resemblance with God, who is the most pure Spirit. "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God."—Matt. v.

Purity cleanses and opens the eyes of the soul to see and know God more perfectly in this life, and draws down his eyes upon her. "How can he resemble God who yields to charms of pleasure, or how can he be said to be endowed with knowledge? The clean heart, and the mind free from vice, is, in some measure, a proper receptacle of the Divine power, as bearing the resemblance of God; and, whoever has this hope in the Lord, renders himself clean and chaste as he is chaste. For it is impossible that a man of any knowledge should pamper his flesh." Clemens Alex. Strom., l. 3, c. 4. "Whoever has this hope sanctifies himself as he is holy."—1 John, iii. St. Austin and Didymus read it: "makes himself chaste as he is chaste."* God, in the Book of

* Castificat seipsum, sicut ipse castus est.

Canticles, treats virgins as his spouses; in the Apocalypse, they appear as the constant companions of the Lamb, and his delight.

The Fathers likewise insist on the particular advantage of this virtue, to fit the soul for heavenly things. Chastity purifies the soul and disengages the mind and heart from the distracting thoughts and affections of this world. "The virgin thinks of the things which are of God."—1 Cor. vii.

An ancient author of a book, "De Pudicitia," under the name of St. Cyprian, sums up the advantage of purity, when he styles it "an honour to the body, an improvement of manners, the sanctifier of the sex, the bond of modesty, the source of chastity, the peace of the family, the crown of friendship. It recommends us to God, connects us with Christ, expels from our bodies all the conflicts of lust and evil desires, and blesses them with a lasting peace. Happy in itself, it renders those happy in whom it deigns to abide." St. Austin observes, that chastity not only renders a man amiable to God, the angels, and virtuous men, but even to the most profligate. For even the most luxurious admire and esteem the chaste. Serm. 343, p. 827, t. 5. "Chastity has four remarkable qualities: it keeps the body clean, whereas lust defiles it. So that, if chastity had no other advantage but cleanness, it would be well worth our while to practise it. But it gives liberty and a clear conscience, and makes us agreeable to men and angels." —St. Bonav., Tr. de Profectu Religiosorum, c. 53.

Blessed Giles, a lay-brother, and one of the first companions and assistants of St. Francis of Assisium, used to say: "It is impossible for any one to come to the grace of God, who delights himself in the filth of the flesh. Turn yourself which way you will, up or down, on this side or on that, there is no way of escaping out of the reach of this enemy, which lurks continually seeking to betray the soul. He who overcomes this, overcomes all his enemies, and attains all good. Among all virtues, this of chastity is amiable to me." One said to him: "Is not charity the greater virtue?" He replied: "And what is more chaste than charity?" He frequently repeated: "O chastity! how sweet, how beautiful art thou! Such is thy dignity and excellence, that fools cannot comprehend it."—St. Antonin., Hist. part 3, tit. 24, c. 12.

8. The more excellent this virtue is, and the higher its glory and reward, so much the more heroic and the more difficult is its victory. St. Austin says, that the devil, who formerly persecuted the martyrs by fire and sword, continues his assaults against the

servants of God by the temptations of lust, which vice he calls the most grievous persecution of the Church, which calls for the continual sighs and tears of all who have the bowels of charity; for not only the Heathens, but even some who carry the sign of the cross on their foreheads, carry also on the same, the ensigns of their lusts; and, on the festivals of the martyrs, rather come to insult them, than to rejoice in them. Enar. in Ps. 69, p. 711, 712, t. 4.

Cassian says of this vice: "It is a sharp and long engagement —a cruel war, in which few succeed." Whence he presses all persons most diligently to arm themselves against it by prayer, reading of the Holy Scriptures, assiduous labour, and, above all, by laying a solid foundation of humility, without which a triumph over any sin cannot be gained. Instit., l. 6, c. 1.

"Of all the attacks sustained in this life, the most dangerous are the assaults against chastity. We are obliged always to be on our guard, and we seldom conquer. The enemy of chastity, even after a defeat, is always formidable. Let no man, then, suffer himself to be lulled into a fatal security, nor foolishly trust to his own strength."—St. Cæsarius, Serm. Ol. 250; Inter. Sermones S. Aug. de Tempore nunc, 293, App. ed. Ben., t. 5.

9. "The virgin must be endowed with a firmness and constancy of mind: for she must walk on red hot coals without being burnt; she must meet naked swords without being wounded; for lust is trying, and not less dangerous, than fire and sword. If we are disposed to submit to pain and uneasiness, we are lost. The mind must be steeled, the eye must be watchful, the body ready to suffer; the walls must be strong, the guards active and courageous."—St. Chrysostom, l. de Virgin., p. 217, t. 1, ed. Ben.

St. Gregory the Great observes, that the passion of lust throws itself in the way to stop the advancement of every soul that desires to serve God. This he calls the most violent enemy of our souls, which is not overcome without great courage and difficulty. It is, therefore, necessary, that we put on all our armour against it, especially most fervent prayer. All other virtues are also necessary; because he who fights against impurity can never conquer this enemy, unless he be strengthened by the whole crown of virtues. L. 4 in 1 Reg. t. 3, ed. Ben., p. 314.

St. Jerome complains, that in his wilderness, amidst continual sighs and tears, watchings, prayer, and fasts, in his emaciated body he felt sometimes the cruel buffets of this domestic enemy; and adds: "These are the favourite arms of the devil against

youth. Neither avarice, nor pride, nor ambition, are so much to be feared. Other vices are easily overcome; but this enemy we carry about us. He attends us, let us go where we will. If, then, I may advise; if experience has afforded me any knowledge, I beg and entreat that a virgin will never taste wine. Let us not pour oil on the fire. Why add fuel to a flame that consumes us?" —Ep. 22. ad Eustochium.

10. St. John Climacus cries out: "I am at a loss to know how to treat my flesh. It is not like other enemies; it is at once a friend and a foe. No chain will hold it, and my partiality prevents its punishment. How can I punish what nature commands me to love? How can I avoid what is intimately united to me? How can I answer its delusive eloquence? It is at once a friend and an enemy, a traitor and an ally. If I yield, I am ruined: if I resist, it is weakened: it will not submit to correction. I cannot inflict it without danger to myself: I cannot indulge it without forfeiting every hope of virtue. Tell me, then, my spouse, tell me, nature, how I can escape being wounded, since Christ has commanded me to wage perpetual war with thee? How can I subdue thy tyrannic sway? I say nothing but what thou knowest to be true. Self-love was my parent, and is my nurse. If thou art sensible of our mutual weakness, I must wear thy chains," &c.—St. Joan. Clim. Gradu. 15.

"We carry about with us our enemy in the flesh, which was conceived and nursed in sin, originally corrupt and habitually wicked. This is the instrument employed against us by the wicked serpent, who aims incessantly at the ruin of our souls. He binds us in our own fetters, and smites us with our own weapons, making the flesh, which was created for our assistance, the cause of our utter ruin and perdition. Hard and dangerous is the contest with a domestic enemy, especially as he is a citizen and we aliens, he is at home and we exiles."—St. Bernard, Serm. 5. in Quadrag.

"Hard is thy struggle, O brother! and deserving of thy most serious attention. All the angels in heaven, and the Lord of angels, are the spectators of thy combat with the devil. If thou comest off victorious, the angels will celebrate thy triumph, and will sing the praises of him, who gave thee courage and power to crush the infernal foe."—St. Ephrem. de Pœnit.

11. St. Gregory Nazianzen observes (Carm. ad Virgines, p. 810), that though virginity be more excellent than marriage,

yet holy marriage far surpasses a virginity which is doubtful, or not faithfully kept. St. Methodius, St. Fulgentius, &c., compare virginity to gold, and marriage to silver; or the former to the sun, and the latter to the stars. St. Austin says, the fruit of virginity is an hundred fold, that of marriage sixty fold. But St. Ambrose admonishes us (l. de Viduis, t. 5. p. 635), that the continency both of the virgins, of the widows, and of the married, will each receive its crown, if it be preserved faithfully without spot or stain. Marriage is the general state of mankind, and may be sanctified by heroic charity, and rendered a state of Christian perfection.

DISCOURSE LV.

ON MATRIMONY.

1. MATRIMONY is a special contract of an individual society of life between a man and a woman, between whom there is no impediment, and who give and accept mutually the dominion of each other's bodies. It is, in itself, exceedingly honourable and holy, instituted by God himself, appointed by him in the state of innocence and perfection in paradise; and, since man's fall, made a remedy of concupiscence, as well as the source whence mankind is propagated and preserved. It is founded in nature, and was of precept in the first creation of man, as St. Cyprian and St. Augustine (l. de Bono Viduit.) observe, as it was God's will that the world should be peopled and maintained: but not afterwards, as to individuals, as appears in Josue, Elias, Jeremiah, Daniel, &c. And in the New Law a state of virginity is more excellent and more perfect. "There are eunuchs, who have made themselves so for the kingdom of heaven."—Matt. xix. 12. See also 1 Cor. vii., &c. Though it is sometimes of precept to particular persons, out of justice to the public, as when the public peace and support of the commonwealth depend upon an heir: yet the words, "Increase and multiply" (Gen. i.) imply not a precept, but a benediction. Matrimony was, in its primitive institution, an office of nature; but, even in the state of innocence, a great mystery and figure, representing the future spiritual union of Christ and his Church.

2. Our blessed Redeemer honoured this contract many ways,

exalted it to the dignity of a sacrament of the New Law, and made its union more strict and sacred. He had from the beginning conferred upon it a singular privilege, as it is a great mystery, ordained to represent his indissoluble union with his Church, which it does more perfectly in the New Law, in which the band is more sacred and more indissoluble. He honoured it with his presence, and by the first miracle which he wrought, at a marriage in Cana. But all his privileges are eclipsed by the dignity of a great sacrament, to which he raised it. Eph. v. 32.

We, then, respect this holy state, so highly honoured by Christ, and we regard it as the seminary of the Church, the nursery of heaven, the mother of the world, a school for the exercise of many great virtues, and the strictest union and nearest relation that can be established between persons, who by it are made one in the same flesh; consequently the source of the greatest comfort, and most perfect enjoyment on earth, of all the advantages of friendship and reciprocal offices of tender love. But, then, the obligations and difficulties of this state are likewise very great, and, if the marriage be unhappy, nothing can be more so; instead of a comfort, it then becomes the greatest plague in life; and, instead of becoming a band of union, it is a perpetual slavery; instead of being an exercise of virtue and a state of sanctity, it is an endless source of disorder and sin. Hence, persons become bad citizens and bad servants. Confusion and vice reign in private families, and the whole world is overrun with a violation of every duty, and with all manner of disorders.

3. Almighty God, in his most tender providence, has furnished Christians with the most powerful helps and the most sovereign means to sanctify their marriages, and fortify themselves against these difficulties. But the general neglect or abuse of them is the great evil, to which we are obliged to ascribe the misfortune of the daily disappointments which happen. Unhappy marriages not only make the parties temporally miserable, but also involve them in spiritual ruin, fill families with all manner of evils and disturbances, are attended with a bad education of children, and are truly the bane of a commonwealth. To prevent such fatal mischiefs, no one ought to engage in this state without mature deliberation and a virtuous intention.

That marriage is not to be embraced rashly or on some sudden notion, we have but to consider the example of such persons as have acted thus imprudently, whose remaining life is a fruitless repentance, as soon as their visionary dreams are over. Secondly,

that it is a choice of the highest importance, both for their temporal and eternal welfare, and on which mainly depends the happiness or misery of the rest of their lives. Thirdly, that it is an unchangeable state for life, and in which no noviceship is allowed, as before entering a religious order, though frequently its difficulties and burdens are much greater and much less known. Fourthly, that it is always a state of many cares and troubles, and a perpetual train of concerns, crosses, and pains, in the management of temporal affairs, education of children, and government of a family. Fifthly, that by it a person stakes himself down a captive for life, binding himself, and resigning the dominion and disposal of himself over to another, and perhaps, to one of a very unsuitable temper, foolish, melancholy, jealous, furious, sordid, haughty, untractable, or perverse. To be thus tied down to an extravagant humour is compared by some to that barbarous invention of tyrants, who coupled the living to a dead carcase, that they might live a lingering death. It is, therefore, a necessary caution for all young persons, that they be upon their guard against all flattering speeches of seduction, not to listen to them, for fear of being inveigled by them to their ruin, and never to be drawn into a snare so far as to part with their liberty by any rash promise, the occasions and dangers of which must be scrupulously shunned.

4. A pious intention is the first thing required to draw down the divine blessing on marriage; but a condition often wanting. One is tempted to marry, only to be independent, to be rid of the check of a watchful parent or aunt; but soon finds it far worse to be tied to one person, with many imperfections and faults, which are to be borne with and suffered. Another marries upon a sudden passion of fondness or carnal love, which he imagines will be perpetual; but sudden passions, though ever so violent, are as suddenly changed, especially if founded on corporal beauty, or other fading qualities. Necessity and hardships amongst the poor, or pride, crosses, or peevishness amongst the rich, soon extinguish that passion; and then all is misery, and the very person becomes hateful. Most persons engage in this state, promising themselves mountains of gold or pleasures, and finding, instead thereof, anxiety, miseries, and antipathy, are the more tormented at the disappointment. Some are induced to marry out of a motive of covetousness: but they usually meet their own punishment in the very state itself, which they abuse, and convert into a market of money.

The only motives or intentions which virtue allows are, first, to seek that individual society of the other sex, for the mutual succour which the instinct of nature directs to procure in the affairs of life.

Secondly, to bring up children in the service of God, who may perpetuate his honour on earth, and people heaven: the noble ends, for which God has instituted the propagation of mankind. Thirdly, it is a lawful, though imperfect motive, to seek by lawful marriage a remedy against temptations of the flesh: 1 Cor. vii.: though this ought, at most, to be only a secondary motive, either in embracing, or in the use of marriage. See St. Austin, l. de Bono Conj., c. 7, 10, 13, &c. St. Gregory the Great, de Cur. Past. 3. P. c. 28. St. Thomas, in 4 Dist. 31, a. 2, ad. 2. St. Bonaventure, &c.

5. The light and direction of the Holy Ghost are to be implored by earnest and persevering prayer, alms, and the practice of other good works, both in the deliberation concerning this state, and in the choice of a wife. A party is to be sought, in the first place, eminent for her purity of faith, and all virtues and spiritual endowments. St. Chrysostom elegantly shows this by the example of Abraham, so solicitous to procure a wife for his son Isaac from amongst the true servants of God. Hom. 46. in Gen.

A deliberation proportioned to the difficulty and importance of the choice is absolutely necessary. The blessed Trinity created man, as it were, by common counsel. "Let us make man to our own image." What man will purchase an estate without knowing the extent and nature of it, and after mature consideration? "Bestow thy daughter, and thou shalt have done a great work; and give her to a prudent man."—Eccl. vii. 27. "A holy and a modest woman is a grace upon grace."—Eccl. xxvi. 19. A wife of virtue, prudence, and conduct will be the greatest comfort, support, and treasure. "He who has found a good wife has found a good thing, and will reap joy from the Lord."—Prov. xvii. 22. "Her prudence and piety will be infinitely the best fortune. A wise woman buildeth her house; but the unwise one will destroy with her hands that which is built."—Prov. xiv. 1. The chief marks of such a one are meekness, humility, devotion, application, love of work, and of abiding at home.

But where shall such a one be found? Sir John More, inculcating this maxim to his son, Sir Thomas, the celebrated chancellor, compares a man going to marry, to one who should put his hand into a sack, in which were ninety-nine serpents, and only

one eel: it is ninety-nine to one, that he lay hold of a venomous creature, and be bit sorely. God is to be earnestly consulted by prayer. He will conduct those who thus open their hearts to him, as he did the young Tobias to Sara. "A house and riches are given by parents, but a prudent wife properly by the Lord." Prov. xix. 14. The advice of spiritual directors is not to be omitted. As parents would sin grievously, who should not leave marriage to their children's free choice and deliberation, as it is their personal engagement; so children sin mortally against the respect and obedience which they owe to parents, if they marry against their consent, or without their advice, unless the parent's opposition be notoriously unjust.

Unsuitable matches between persons of very different ranks usually produce dissension among relations, and many other evils, which render them in general unlawful before God. St. Chrysostom, in his homily on this subject (Hom. Quales Uxores sint ducendæ, t. 3, 13, 217): "Let us seek only one thing, virtue and good manners, that we may enjoy perpetual peace and benevolence. For he who marries a rich wife chooses rather a mistress than a wife. And riches are sooner scattered than any cloud. But a modest woman knows how to make a good use even of poverty."

6. Matrimony is a great sacrament, as it is called by the apostle, on account of its founder Christ, and of the great mystery which it represents, viz., the eternal espousal of Christ with his Church; and on account of the great ends for which it was instituted, the great and important graces which it bestows, and the great obligations it lays upon those who receive it, to fulfil which it gives the most powerful spiritual succours. The dangers and obligations of this state are of such a nature, that it was a singular mercy of Christ to man that he was pleased to establish this holy sacrament, to qualify and strengthen him to comply more easily and perfectly with them, and live up to the sanctity of his calling. Yet we see marriage defiled and filled with all manner of disorders, even amongst Christians. Nor can we be surprised at this general desolation, if we consider that, though no sacrament be more necessary, yet no sacrament is more criminally profaned. Men receive it full of the world and their passions, and with very little preparations. What wonder, then, that they find their abuse of it a source of maledictions! The devil knows that if he defile Christian marriages, he shall hence easily infect the whole commonwealth with a deluge of sin. His stratagem succeeds. From the abuse of this holy sacra-

ment and state, flow the numberless evils under which we groan.*

Those who desire to escape the wrecks both of soul and body in this state, must be careful to bring the best preparation possible to this holy sacrament, and to the nuptial bed, by all the conditions above mentioned, by a long course of prayer, a most perfect repentance and purity of heart, and by the most holy intention and motives.

7. In the holy ceremonies with which this sacrament is conferred, the ring, blessed and put on the woman's finger, signifies fidelity of heart and mouth, and that their mutual love and engagement are not to be ended but by death. The piece of money shows, that the husband promises her his care and provision, and her acknowledgment of his authority in the administration, in which she can claim no other strict right than what is allowed for the direction of the interior domestic affairs, though the husband ought to share with her all his concerns, as prudence and confidence shall suggest. The joining of hands signifies the mutual help between the two parties, in prosperity and adversity. The blessing of the priest is to beg of God plentiful grace, fruitfulness, concord, peace, and prosperity, temporal and spiritual. Paranymphs are sometimes employed in this sacrament, to offer the bride to the bridegroom, to represent how God brought Eve to Adam, and to show that the intention of marriage is the glory of God, and the procreation and education of children. The essence of the contract consists in the mutual free engagement exteriorly expressed by each party, by which they deliver to each other the dominion of their persons. The day of marriage ought all to be employed in devotion, following the example of the young Tobias. All passion is to be excluded from the intention in approaching each other, lest they fall under the power of the devil Asmodeus, who slew the seven lustful husbands of Sara. The solemn benediction in matrimony is given to the spouse before the people, because the Mass is chiefly applied to them. The priest also prays for their special graces after the Pater Noster, in which he had prayed for their general necessities in the Petitions.

A happy marriage is a holy and inviolable league, an honourable alliance, a sweet society maintained with constancy, mutual

* Fœcunda culpæ secula nuptias
Primum inquinavere et genus et domos;
Hoc fonte derivata clades
In patriam populumque fluxit.

trust, a continual chain of good offices and duties mutually paid, a reciprocity of chaste affections, entire friendship, will, inclinations, persons, interests, and goods. The principal obligations of the parties are love, fidelity, the education of children, and care of their temporal affairs. The superiority of the husband is clear from the Old and New Testament. It is founded in nature itself, and in the strength, sufficiency, and majesty of his sex, and the softness and weakness of the other. He, therefore, owes to the wife, as the weaker vessel, singular tenderness, compassion, complaisance, care, support, and protection. The wife owes to him submission and reasonable obedience. It is her duty to make his temper her study, and to soften his passions by her unwearied sweetness, tenderness, and compassion for his weaknesses. As she loves and honours him, she is to show this, and to set him off in words and behaviour, without fulsome affectation, as her glory. She must give him the deference, in all affairs, and attribute to him the honour of everything. It is the amiable qualification of her sex to be humble, modest, reserved in words, loving, and peaceable. By this conduct she will gain her husband and others to God, and be the blessing of her family.

8. Mutual constant love and affection is the first duty of the married state. It is the strictest alliance, the closest and the most indissoluble union on earth, which is to be in hearts, in concerns, and in bodies, so that they be two in the same flesh. Christ could not give us a greater idea of this than by declaring it, through his apostle Paul, to be a great mystery—the image of his union with his Church, on which he imprints his Spirit to the end of the world. To break an alliance so sacred must be a crying sacrilege. Adam expresses the tie of this conjunction of man and wife in these strong words, confirmed by Christ: "A man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh."—Gen. ii. 24. "Therefore, now they are not two but one flesh."—Mark, x. 7, 8. Upon which St. Chrysostom says (Hom. 45. in Gen. t. 4, p. 458): "As the body is never divided from itself, nor the soul against itself, so neither man and wife should be ever divided, but always united." And upon those words of St. Paul (Tit. ii. 2): "To love their husbands," he writes thus: "This is the principal foundation of domestic peace, and of all good, if the wife in all things agree with the husband. Where this is, nothing can happen sorrowful. If the head be united with the body, all things must be in peace. If princes agree, who can divide the

people? But if these disagree, nothing can go well, and the whole family must totter. Nothing is greater or more necessary than this. It goes far beyond riches, nobility, power, honours; it is most useful for all things."

9. Mutual fidelity and continency are the second great conjugal duty, which they inviolably promise to each other and to God, who seals and confirms their engagement by the sacred band of the sacrament, which draws its force of binding and cementing them into one from the adorable blood of Christ. Hence adultery is a profanation of this sacrament, a violation of the most solemn and inviolable contract, a grievous injustice to the injured party in what is more precious than his estate.

A marriage, without mutual love and union, is a kind of hell: for a perpetual cohabitation with one, whose person and conversation are disagreeable, and who is an object of aversion, joined with the thought, that only death can be a deliverance, makes such a situation more uneasy than can be expressed. To prevent this misfortune is often more difficult than is generally imagined. All a person's imperfections, capricious tempers, and bad humours; every folly, impertinence, vanity, &c., discover themselves in wedlock. The demeanour towards externs is obliging and agreeable; but in a domestic life, the mask is taken off, and a person appears such as he or she really is. Hence it is incredible how much a person has to suffer from a husband, who is capricious, haughty, choleric, untractable; or what a sensible man has to endure with an unreasonable wife. How hard not to imbibe each other's pride, ambition, avarice, anger, or not to be engaged to connive at and favour them; or flatter, by condescension, the other's vices, &c.

In the degrees of chastity, the first rank is that of virginity; the second is that of continency, as in the holy widowhood; the third is that of conjugal chastity, which has its special merit. The Fathers unanimously distinguished these states in this order. See St. Austin, St. Chrysostom, the ancient author of the book "On Purity," amongst the works of St. Cyprian, &c. Indeed, conjugal chastity has its conflicts, which, in some circumstances, may be much more severe and troublesome than in a state of virginity, as during the sickness of either party, and in several other cases. Sir Thomas More declared, that he found it so by experience. Marriage is, indeed, a remedy against temptations of the flesh, as St. Paul, St. Austin, &c., call it; but then it is a violent one. Any excess or intemperance in the lawful use of marriage

is a venial sin, as St. Austin has wrote whole books to prove. And any sin against purity, whether in thought, word, or action, is aggravated by the sanctity of that state. It is to be advised, that they observe strict continency on festivals, fasts, and the days before and after communion, as St. Charles admonishes; which was strictly commanded by several ancient canons now in disuse. Mons. Villefore has made an ample collection of them. St. Paul advises married persons to continency for a time, to apply themselves to prayer. It is pointed out by nature during the corporal infirmities of the sex (Lev. xx. 1); though the marriage duty cannot, in justice, be absolutely refused, if lawfully asked.

10. Patience is an indispensable virtue of this state, which, being engaged in a variety of worldly affairs, always inconstant and uncertain, is exposed to frequent crosses and trials from disappointments and failures in concerns; whence tribulation is the portion of the married. "Such shall have tribulation of the flesh."—1 Cor. vii. 28. The parties will likewise have a great deal to suffer from one another. No one is without some imperfection of mind or body; and both husband and wife will have often enough to *forgive* each other, and always something to bear. Life is long for persons who are always together night and day; nor can any one enjoy a perpetual flow of health, cheerfulness, and spirits. Those who have more to bear, having a wife or husband of an untoward or brutish temper, must provide themselves with more than an ordinary stock of patience, and look upon this circumstance as ordained by God for the exercise of their virtue, as Socrates, on that account, thought it a gain to virtue, that he had the most intolerable shrew for a wife. The Christian is to consider, that it is by this trial he is to be saved. St. Chrysostom speaks thus on the subject: "Thy wife is perpetually at war with thee; when thou comest into thy house, she meets thee like some wild beast, and whets her tongue like a sharp sword against thee. It is, indeed, a severe circumstance, that thy assistant is to become thy adversary. But examine yourself, if in your youth you have not, by some levity or crime, provoked the divine justice, by which you have deserved this chastisement; and your wife is employed by God to heal your wound. She does the office of a spiritual surgeon, and, though she does not know the wounds which she cuts, the physician, who is God, knows them." In Ps. 3, p. 3. F. C. ed. Ben., &c. Patience and sweetness will have some effect on the most savage heart, and will, in the end, often convert it to God; at least it will mitigate and soften it, and gain

the greatest crown of glory. Read the life of St. Monica. The good effect of a respectful, officious, and condescending love, joined with a virtuous example, is incredible. St. Jerome said of Læta, in his high figurative style: "I believe that Jupiter himself, if he had such a wife, would have believed in Christ." "If the husband be savage or harsh," says St. Basil, "a wife must bear him. Does he strike or beat, but he is your husband; he is linked to you by nature, and is your member."—l. 7, Hex.

11. The principal obligation and end of marriage is the good education of children. St. Charles orders that parents be admonished, whilst the mother is with child, daily to recommend and offer her fruit earnestly to God, begging his blessing and grace, that it may ever faithfully serve his Divine Majesty, and still more, after its birth and baptism; receiving it from the sacred font as a most precious treasure entrusted to them by God, to be preserved in innocence and sanctity, and prepared to be a citizen of heaven. St. Charles and the rituals admonish, that children, from the first use of reason, if possible, be laid in separate beds, especially those of different sexes.

It suffices to add here, that the greatest comforts of a married state are to be expected from good children, as the most severe trials are also from them, if disobedient and untractable. Even the afflictions from their sickness, death, and the like accidents, deterred Thales from marrying, not to expose his virtue to so dangerous a trial, which Solon himself was not able to bear, as we read in a memorable example in his life, in Plutarch.

Set children no example of irregular passions; teach them from their cradle to curb their own; guard them from all impressions, which tend to kindle their passions, or the love of the world, and to extinguish in them the grace of God. Watch against bad company; instruct them early in the maxims and spirit of piety, &c.

Lastly, how difficult is it to live in the hurry of the world, and not be carried away by the torrent of its dispositions, spirit, and maxims! To live in it so as not to be of it; but, in the midst of its whirlpool, to maintain one's self steady in the maxims and spirit of our holy faith.

DISCOURSE LVI.

ON THE ENORMITY OF IMPURITY.

1. Impurity is a crime which ought not even to be named among Christians. "Let not fornication or any sort of uncleanness be even mentioned among us, as it becometh saints."—Eph. v. 3. Such ought to be the purity, such the sanctity of a Christian, that he ought only to know the name of this vice to abhor and detest it, and never to defile his lips with mentioning it, or his mind with its remembrance, that he may truly be a fellow of the angels, and a son of God, who is the infinite, holy, and most pure spirit. But, alas! the havoc which this wicked demon makes among souls obliges us to transgress this holy law, though the subject calls for our tears rather than for words. For, when we consider the desolation which it brings upon the whole earth, the innumerable sins which it causes, the disorders and misfortunes into which it precipitates men, and the divine judgments, temporal and eternal, which it brings down upon them; when we see the innocent age of youth often corrupted by this infamous sin, the most flourishing portion of God's Church dishonoured by this detestable vice, and the first fruits of the lives of many stolen from God, and consecrated to the devil by this deplorable evil, what heart is not pierced with sorrow, crying out with Jeremiah: "Who will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes, and I will bewail night and day?"—Jer. ix. 1. To inspire ourselves with a just abhorrence of this soul-destroying monster, and with a saving dread of its dangers, it is necessary to consider how heinous this sin is in the sight of God.

2. Whilst sin reigned almost without controul, after the fall of our first parents, in this vice it principally shows its empire over men. By it "the earth was defiled before God, and was filled with iniquity: for all flesh had corrupted its way upon earth."—Gen. vii. 11, 12. "God seeing that much was the malice of men on earth, and that all the thoughts of their heart were intent on doing evil at all times, it repented him that he had made man on earth; and being touched inwardly with grief of heart, he said: I will exterminate man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth; from man to brute creatures, and from the reptile to the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that

I have made them."—Gen. iv. 5, 6, 7. This threat he executed by the universal deluge, by which, to purge the earth from the abominations of impurity with which it was defiled, he drowned the whole race of Adam, except Noe and his family, whom he preserved in the ark. Sodom and Gomorrha, with the neighbouring cities, in punishment of the unnatural lust to which they had abandoned themselves, were destroyed by a shower of fire and brimstone from heaven, which God rained down upon them; and by which the most fruitful and delightful spot of the whole country was changed into an impure lake of stinking waters. Gen. xix. 24. And of their inhabitants, on account of this sin, the Holy Ghost pronounces: "The Sodomites were sinners, and the worst of sinners in the sight of God."—Gen. xiii. 13. Twenty-four thousand Israelites were put to death for this abominable crime, and many thousands defeated and destroyed several ways for these and other similar abominations, as we read in the sacred history. Of Onan it is recorded: "He was slain by the Lord, because he was guilty of a shocking crime."—Gen. xxxviii. 10. If this sin deserve so remarkable a vengeance in that age of ignorance and weakness, what shall we say of its enormity when committed by Christians under the law of grace, and amidst the light of the Gospel! But what is that, which so much aggravates the malice of this sin, and which, above other vices, heaven will not bear?

3. The characteristical malice of this vice consists in this, that by it a man defiles and sins against his own body. The nearer and dearer this ought to be to him, the greater the purity and sanctity with which he is bound to adorn it, the more grievous is the enormity of this crime. "Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body."—1 Cor. vi. 18. Hence, sins which immediately attack the majesty of God, as blasphemy, sacrilege, perjury, &c., and also spiritual sins, as pride or envy, are usually more grievous than sins of the flesh as to this circumstance; but these being committed by a man against his own flesh, a nearer and more noble object than the goods of fortune, or anything external to him, are more heinous than sins of theft, or the like. Moreover, on other accounts, the malice of any sin of impurity is exceedingly enhanced. For, first, it effaces the image of God in man in the most horrible and outrageous manner. He has been pleased to imprint upon us the adorable lineaments of himself; has given us a spiritual and immortal soul, endowed

with reason, and a pure spirit like himself; and this not only capable of, but, by his bounty and goodness, enriched with the gifts of his grace and supernatural virtues. Now the carnal man not only strips his soul of its empire and dominion over the body, which, by its nature, dignity, and the divine order, it ought to rule, command, and govern, but he basely enslaves it to the flesh by a more monstrous inversion of nature, than if he had placed, I do not say the vilest and most stupid slave, but the most filthy, base, weak, and savage beast, or an impotent insect, on a royal throne to govern a glorious kingdom of men. What must be the indignation of the angels to see a noble soul, their sister by nature and grace, the glory of the whole material world, degraded and reduced to the most base slavery imaginable to its own corruptible flesh, which it was formed to command and rule in sanctity! What would be your compassion, what your indignation, if you saw a great empress at once stripped of her dominions, crowns, jewels, royal robes, and every mark of honour, and reduced to the most vile and barbarous slavery, covered with filth, and condemned to feed hogs and cleanse their sties? Your soul is a heavenly queen, and sister to the angels; but, by this horrible sin, she is on a sudden degraded from her dignity, despoiled of all her graces and gifts, and reduced to the most infamous and cruel servitude. And she, who before bore the image of God, now wears that of the devil: the very traces of the former are defaced. The higher the dignity and the honour, the more noble the privilege, and the greater the advantage of human nature to bear a resemblance with the divinity, the more heinous affront it is, and the more outrageous an insult, to deface this divine image. The Emperor Theodosius fell into the most violent transports of fury, when his statues had been thrown into the dirt at Thessalonica. But here it is the image of God, and this not carved in stone, or drawn by a pencil in colours, but his spiritual and living image that is erased. Every mortal sin, indeed, disfigures and blots out the most noble lineaments of the divine image in the soul, which consist in grace, charity, and sanctity, as the Fathers observe: but no sin does this in so foul a manner as that of impurity, which not only exterminates grace, but renders the soul itself quite carnal, and worse than brutish, enslaved to the most furious and unbridled appetites of lust. "Do you reflect whose image you have defiled, to whom you have offered the affront?"—St. Chrys. "What a shame is it, that a crooked mind should dishonour an erect body? Shall a

spiritual and eternal substance grovel on earth? Shall a soul, created to fill a throne, debase herself to the condition of a swine, and wallow in the mire? Blush, my soul, to have exchanged the divine resemblance for the nature and the habits of brutes. Blush, my soul, to have forgotten thy heavenly origin. Blush, says the body, when you consider my situation."—St. Bern., Serm. 24. in Cant., n. 6, p. 1348.

4. Christians are, moreover, consecrated to God, by his grace and baptism: they are the members of Christ's body. Now what a crime must it be to take the members of so noble a head, and make them the members of a harlot, as St. Paul expresses it, to strike into us an abhorrence of this vice. 1 Cor. vi. 15. This is an outrage, which no one can think of without horror, to tear from him a body, which he had consecrated to himself, and to deliver it a slave to his mortal enemy. What an insult! What a sacrilege! What a persecution against Christ, worse than that of Saul's! "Saul, why dost thou persecute me?"—Acts, ix. Is this your return for all his infinite benefits, and especially for that of your redemption? If you have no regard for your own dignity or advantage, no compassion for your own soul; at least respect Christ in yourself. "The body is a member of Christ; whither art thou hurrying? Return to Christ. Into what a precipice art thou falling. Spare Christ in thyself. Acknowledge Christ in thee." "Taking up the members of Christ, shall I make them the members of a strumpet?"—St. Aug. Serm. 161, Ol. 18. de Verbis Ap., p. 775, t. 5.

We are also the temples of the Holy Ghost, who dwells in us by his graces. He who fills the heavens and the earth with his immensity, and who is present to, and exists in all things, even in the wicked, resides in a particular manner in the faithful Christian, with infinite complacency, making his heart his throne, anointing him with his grace, and making him his most holy temple. The priest, in baptism, drives out the devil, and repeats in his exorcisms: "Depart from him, thou impure spirit, and give place to the Holy Ghost."* But the impure man outrageously chases away the Divine Spirit, saying, by his actions, though not in words, what fills us with horror: "Depart Holy Spirit, and give place to the unclean spirit." What an injury and insult to the Divine Spirit! "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? But if any

* Exi ab eo, immunde spiritus, et da locum Spiritui Sancto.

man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy; which you are."—1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. How do you abhor the sacrileges of Baltassar in profaning the sacred vessels, for which he was so severely punished by God; of Antiochus, in polluting the Temple, for which he fell a terrible victim to the divine justice; and other examples recorded in Holy Writ: yet these impious wretches profaned only God's material temple. But by impurity a man pollutes his living temple in himself. "Know you not, that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you are bought at a great price. Glorify and bear God in your body."—1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. "Wherever thou goest, Jesus sees thee, the Jesus that made thee, redeemed thee when lost, and died for thee to recall thee to life. Thou forgottest thyself, but his eyes are constantly fixed on thee, not to assist, but to punish thee. The countenance of God is on the doers of evils, that he may blot out the remembrance of them on earth."—St. Aug., Serm. 171. olim, 18. de Verbis Ap., p. 775, t. 5, ed. Ben.

"If we are so offended at the thought of seeing the material temple of God turned into a hog-sty, or filled with dirt and rubbish, what must we think of ourselves, if in the living temple of God we admit unclean and filthy thoughts?"—St. Cæsarius, Hom. 3, 19, 20.

5. The terrible effects of this sin of impurity sets its enormity and evil still in a higher light. Every sinner, in the language of our blessed Redeemer, has the devil for his father, and is himself a devil. But this agrees in a particular manner to the vice of impurity, because this produces in the soul the greatest opposition to God, by the greatest aversion of the will from him, and the greatest blindness in the understanding. Men enslaved to impurity find a repugnance even to think on God, or to look up to heaven. They, like the unchaste old men mentioned in Daniel, xiii. 9, "have turned aside their eyes, lest they should see heaven, or remember the judgments of the first judge." St. Gregory and St. Thomas observe, that the daughters or effects of lust in a soul are, first, a blindness in the understanding; second, rashness; third, want of consideration; fourth, inconstancy; fifth, self-love; sixth, an hatred of God; seventh, an affection to this present life; and eighth, an horror of the world to come. These are the unhappy progeny of that infamous parent, and they show that, even in this world, the unchaste man begins his state of damnation. Hell is

represented in the Gospel as a place of exterior darkness; but the impure libertine, even in this life, lies under an interior darkness of mind. The consideration of divine things makes no impression on his corrupted soul; he sees not the most important spiritual truths, and blinds himself to their consequences. To satisfy his brutal passion, he forfeits heaven, and condemns himself to hell for eternity; and to divert the sting of his own conscience, so as not to be disturbed in his base sensual enjoyments, he turns a downright libertine. "Those who are of the flesh, relish such things as are of the flesh."—Rom. viii.

A soul corrupted and defiled by this beastly sin becomes altogether sensual, is drowned in filthy pleasures, and attached to this earth; has no light, no taste, no understanding for the high truths of religion. Impurity gives a great disrelish of all the mysteries of our religion, and an aversion to spiritual things. As a deadly poison it infects the whole soul, and extinguishes in her all the noble sentiments of virtue. It often leads at length into the depth of irreligion and atheism. It is a just observation, that pretended atheists, in all ages, have been slaves to pride and other passions, but in general, most of all, to impurity. No one doubts of the being of a God but he whose interest it is that there should be no God. If the sensual liver acknowledge a God, and another world, this is such a conviction of his present folly, so manifest an ingratitude against his Maker, and a reproach so troublesome to his base, criminal heart, that the only expedient left him is to dispute these great truths, and to harden his heart against the belief of another life. "The foolish man has said in his heart: there is no God."—Ps. lii. 1. He says it in his desire or heart; for he cannot say it in his understanding, in which is stamped the knowledge of a God. Rather than to be obliged to renounce his darling vices he blinds his understanding, and pretends to live and die hard.

6. Experience also shows, that nothing is so capable of perverting the will as this vice, as well as of blinding the intellect, and confounding reason. Thus does this foul vice corrupt the whole man, all the powers of the soul. "Lust triumphs over the whole man."—St. Cyprian. Thus Daniel tells one of the old unchaste men, who assaulted Susanna: "Concupiscence has corrupted thy heart." Of this we read a dreadful example in King Solomon, the wisest of men, some time a prophet, and in certain things a type of Christ; yet, in his old age, "his heart was corrupted by women to follow foreign gods."—3 Kings, ii. 4.

We see many persons well educated, who have very good inclinations, an aversion from evil, a great affection to piety, the fear of God strongly imprinted in their souls. Now, all these good qualities remain, if impurity does not take possession of the heart. But, if this hellish monster once find admittance, it subverts them all. Things now appear far otherwise than they did before. The sin now seems no more so great; it becomes familiar to them; and one who before had a great apprehension of mortal sin, when once overcome by this brutal passion, is not afraid to commit them by hundreds. He, who before could not sleep one night in one mortal sin, now can pass several, infected with numbers of them, without apprehension of the judgment of God, going from sin to sin, drinking iniquity like water. Good God! what a change! what a subversion is this! What a havoc does this sin make in the soul! Nor do its ravages stop here. For impurity also causes a great disrelish of, and insensibility to, all the mysteries of religion, and an aversion to spiritual things; as a deadly poison, it infects the whole soul, and extinguishes in her all noble sentiments of virtue.

Do we not daily see that lust produces a disrelish, and even an aversion to virtue, piety, and devotion? It is not to be conceived, how souls infected with it contract a loathing of divine things. Prayer is tedious to them; the sacraments contemptible; the word of God moves them not; reading pious books is insupportable. This is too manifest by experience; and no wonder. He who is ill of a fever takes no delight in the most delicious meats, because is taste is vitiated by bitter juices. Thus a man, who is seized with the burning fever of impurity, finds a wonderful loathing of all that is pious, because he is infected with carnal and impure affections, which permit him not to relish the sweetness of holy things. "The sensual man understands not the things which are of God." What hopes can there be of a conversion in such persons, since they have an aversion to the means which must effectually bring it about? The sacraments they either shun and neglect, or approach unworthily. Alas! sacrilegious confessions and communions are common among Christians, principally through this shameful vice. They who are not ashamed to commit, fear to disclose it, and thus add to their other sins the most horrible profanations of the adorable blood of Christ.

7. From this same vice spring a most foolish pride and arrogance, which make the mind despise all admonitions, resist all in-

structions, and scoff at the most wholesome counsels. "The luxurious man has heard, and he shall be displeased, and shall throw it behind his back."—Eccl. xxi. 18. This pride is accompanied with a strong obdurateness of the will. For impurity imitates the malice of the devils, and their obstinacy in evil. The damned in hell grieve for their past wickedness, but for their own sake only; not for any love of God, their will being fixed in evil, and their miserable state of reprobation being joined with obstinacy; for could they, in hell, change their will and be converted, hell would cease to be hell; but their state admits of no change. Now, the sin of impurity leads to this state of obstinacy in evil, more than any other vice whatever. Whence St. Thomas observes, that, though spiritual sins, such as pride, are of their own nature more grievous, yet those of the flesh are of the strongest adhesion or attachment. On which account, the devils chiefly delight in enslaving men to this sin, and place in it their chief strength. "Men become slaves to the devil by impurity more than by any other vice," says St. Bernard, Serm. 23. de More Bene Vivendi.

Habits of this vice are harder to be broken than any other, and more strongly enslave the soul than any other sin, as experience makes evident. How many times have unchaste sinners confessed their crimes, pretending to detest them, to change their lives, and to break their fetters; who yet have miserably relapsed almost on the first occasion, remaining still slaves to this infamous passion? The devil of impurity has returned with seven other devils worse than the first, as our Saviour represents to us the condition of such persons. Luke, xi. St. Peter speaks of this sin as a vice that never ceases, "Full of unceasing guilt."—2 Pet. ii. 4. The prophet Hosea laments their impenitent state, when the evil spirit of fornication has once found entrance. "They will not turn their thoughts towards returning to God, because the spirit of fornication is among them."—Hosea, v. Such a miserable soul is sold as it were a slave to sin, to use the expression of St. Paul. Rom. vii.

The difficulty of breaking the chains of these habits puts a soul under a kind of terrible necessity. "Let him that is in filth grow filthier still."—Apoc. xxii. 11.

These inveterate habits often lead men into absolute despair, which complete their ruin by final impenitence. "In despair they have given themselves up to uncleanness."—Ephes. iv. 19. Plunged into the gulf of despair, they abandon themselves to

all excesses of impurity, and it is their portion to pass from the flames of lust into the lake of fire and brimstone, as St. John says: "Some of them in a lake of fire and brimstone."—Apoc. xxi. 8.

O how dismal are the effects of this vice in the souls of men! This sin of final impenitence is the accomplishment of all the rest, the mark at which all the before-mentioned aim; an effect so dreadful, that we cannot mention it without horror, nor think of it without dread or apprehension. For death in mortal sin is of all evils the most frightful and irretrievable. The lascivious man, on account of the former effects, is certainly in the most deplorable condition; he is an enemy of God, the slave of the devil, and the object of reprobation. But still he lives; and whilst he lives, all hopes are not lost. But to cause a death in sin, to infer final impenitence; O let not the tongues of men or angels pretend to express this calamity! "There is no hope for the impious man after death." This alone can find no redemption; neither the supplication of saints, nor the blood of martyrs, nor the penance of confession, nor the precious blood of Christ itself, sufficient to redeem ten thousand worlds, will ever wash it away. Yet this is the ordinary effect of impurity. Death surprises by some accident, or else in obduracy or despair, or with a half and insufficient death-bed repentance. "God knows how to save the just under temptation, and to reserve the wicked for eternal fire; especially such as have walked in the path of lust and uncleanness."—2 Peter, ii. 9. Thus final impenitence closes the unhappy career of evils flowing from this vice. To relate one example: St. Gregory the Great tells us (Dial., l. 4), that there was one Chrysoarius, a man of quality, and very rich, but abounding with vices as much as with wealth, and above all addicted to sins of the flesh. God, resolving to put a period to his crimes, sent him a severe sickness, of which he died, but in a very extraordinary manner. Approaching to the term of his distemper he suddenly perceived a multitude of evil spirits, who presented themselves to him in hideous shapes, and made a show as if they were going immediately to carry him into hell. He began to tremble, look aghast, and lamentably cry for succour. He turned himself on every side to avoid the sight of those horrid spectres; but which way soever he moved, they were continually before his eyes. After many strugglings, finding himself oppressed, and violently treated by the wicked spirits, he began horribly to cry out: "Truce till morning; truce till morning." And in these

dreadful exclamations his wretched soul was torn from his body in miserable despair.

These are the dismal effects of the sin of impurity, which yet many call by the soft name of a sin of frailty; but to such St. Paul says: "Deceive not yourselves; neither fornicators, nor adulterers, &c., shall enter into the kingdom of God."—1 Cor. vi. 10.

8. The unclean devil, who slew the seven husbands to whom Sarah had been married one after another, because they took her to wife not in the fear of God, but to gratify their lust (Tob. vi. 17), was called Asmodeus, which name signifies an abundance of iniquity, and a destroyer, expressing the dreadful effects and the numberless sins of which this vice is the fruitful parent by glances and every one of the senses; by thoughts, by desires, by words, and by actions; often also by quarrels, flatteries, detractions, calumnies, lies, rash judgments, disobedience and contempt of parents, and almost every other sin. The greatest disorders of the world flow secretly from this source; and this sin chiefly fills hell with souls, for more are eternally damned by this vice than by all other sins. "This is the most dangerous vice to mankind," as St. Gregory the Great says.

Alcuin writes: "The devil triumphs over the whole human race by pride and fornication."—L. de Civ. Offic., c. 13.

9. We must add, that the God of all purity has stamped upon these sins a mark of the utmost infamy and contempt. Persons once guilty of them, if it be known, forfeit all claim to any honour or reputation in the world; and the very name of debauchery carries with it the utmost degree of shame, infamy, and confusion. St. Austin observes often, it is so base, that above all other sins it covers with disgrace, and seeks to be concealed, for which he gives this reason: "We should be ashamed to let the body enslave the mind, which was appointed to command."—L. 14. de Civ. 6, n. 3, 5, p. 373, ed. Ben.

Impure love, if indulged, is not to be called a passion like other vices, but a perfect fury; for it allows no rest, and knows no end or bounds in sinning. "Lust is a cruel incentive to sin. It never suffers the passions to rest; it burns at night, it sighs in the day-time; it awakens from sleep; it unfits for business, overpowers nature, silences prudence, torments the lover, overthrows the frail, betrays the chaste, and acquires strength from habit. There is no end to its transgressions; it is a burning thirst after sin, which death alone can assuage. Whence the

apostle warns us: 'Fly fornication;' and make haste to quit the cruel slavery of an imperious mistress."—St. Ambrose, l. 1. de Abel et Cain, c. 5, p. 180, t. 1. Voluptuous persons, as a penitent, who had formerly experienced the misery of that state, one day told me, find themselves possessed with a violent passion for corporeal pleasure, and with an impudent and furious devil, who is seated in their hearts, where he gives sensible proofs of his presence. He burns them in temptation with a fire like a boiling furnace, takes from them all fear of God, makes them contemn the flames of hell, gives them a loathing of prayer, takes away their reason, and quite blinds them. Happy are they who never felt the miseries of this war. Let us pray that God preserve us from the cruel experience of it; for they who are fallen into this gulf cannot easily rise, and stand in need of sweats, fastings, and extraordinary abstinence to draw themselves out of this abyss. S. John Climacus, Grad. 15.

10. On account of the singular heinousness of this sin, and the difficulty of its cure, in the primitive ages the penances enjoined for it were particularly long and severe, as may be seen in the penitential canons; to which St. Charles orders confessors always to attend in prescribing penances. The sins of impurity, together with those of idolatry and murder, were objects of public and canonical punishment. Seven years were enjoined by St. Basil for fornication, Ep. 3. ad Amphiloch. Can. 15, t. 1, ed. Bevereg., p. 115. For adultery, some canons prescribed fifteen years, and others a still longer period. For sodomy, the whole life of the penitent was thought scarcely sufficient. Every indecent act, such as immodest touches either of one's self or others, was subjected to strict punishment; so that even for an immodest word three days' penance was required. See Canones Penitentiales Reginonis a Baluzio editi; item Burchardi, l. 10. cap. 56.

From this discipline of the Church, guided by the Spirit of God, St. John Climacus, having written much on the enormity of this vice, adds, that a certain learned man asked him, why the Church inflicted penances of so many years for sins of lust more than for other sins, which seemed more grievous, *e. g.*, heresy, to which he was able to give no answer. Grad. 15. But Abbot John of Raithe, in his Annotations (Ib. Bibl. Patr., t. 6, part 2, p. 305), answers, that heresy is often excused by ignorance, whereas sins of lust are committed most voluntarily, by free choice, barely for the sake of criminal pleasure, and without the least plea of ignorance or other excuse. And in other sins, the

conversion is more easy and entire; whereas in lust a penitent requires time and many tears to heal the wound of concupiscence, and extinguish the sting of pleasure. "Three deadly sins are to be punished by excommunication, impurity, idolatry, and murder."—St. Aug. l. de Fide et Operibus, c. 13. Nay, the Fathers say, that impurity deserves a more severe punishment than a forced idolatry. "Which of the two more shamefully denies Christ, the person who yields to torments, or who is overcome by pleasure; he who regrets his own weakness, or he who enjoy sthe fruits of his treachery?"—Tert., l. de Pudicitia. "The man who is a slave to lust has no excuse. He cannot plead necessity, since he sins with perfect freedom."—St. Cyprian, Ep. 2. ad Antonin.

DISCOURSE LVII.

ON THE DIFFERENT SPECIES OF SINS OF IMPURITY.

1. That precept of the law of nature, which is comprised in the sixth commandment of the decalogue, condemns whatever defiles the purity either of mind or body. Of impurity there are six complete species. First, adultery, or carnal commerce of one with a married person, not one's own wife or husband. This is a grievous crime, which in one comprises many sins; for it is an injury done to the sacrament and sacred bond of matrimony, and to God its author; and it is, at the same time, a crime against chastity, charity, and justice. Nor can the consent of wife or husband diminish any single circumstance of this guilt; because no one can alienate or transfer to another the right, which marriage gives him alone. If both the partners in this sin be married, it is a double adultery. The enormous sin of adultery has been always most severely punished even among barbarous nations. By a law of Constantine the Great it was punished with death. L. 1. de Pœnis, Cod. Theodos.

Incest is a carnal commerce with a person within the four forbidden degrees either of consanguinity or of affinity. This prohibition, at least as to the first and second degrees, is a precept of the law of nature. Also, the spiritual affinity, which arises from having been godfather or godmother in the sacraments

of baptism or confirmation, suffices to constitute the crime of incest.

Impurity is a sacrilege, if committed in a place consecrated to the divine worship, or if either party be consecrated to God by a vow either solemn or private, or be engaged in holy orders.

If neither party, in criminal commerce, be under any of the forementioned circumstances, the crime between persons of a different sex is called simple fornication. Nature clearly points out that this crime is a violation of its unchangeable law, by the number of both sexes being nearly equal, by the necessity of each sex concurring in the good education of children, and in the care of what concerns them, and by the necessity of preventing the uncertainty of fathers, to whom children belong, and the inconveniences and mischiefs which would flow to the commonwealth. Whence, St. Paul reckons fornication among the grievous crimes that exclude men from the kingdom of heaven. Eph. v. 1; Cor. vi.; Rom. i. 22. If the party that falls into this crime was before a virgin, this deflowering is a circumstance which adds a special malice, and constitutes a distinct species in this crime.

A rape is a violent carrying away a person in order to marriage or any intention of lust. If the person be carried off by stratagems or artifices, it is a rape of seduction. The laws of Constantine the Great command that he who has ravished a virgin, whether she consented or not, should be punished by pouring melted lead down his throat. Lege si quis, l. 9, Cod. Theodos. tit. 24. de Captu Virg. Justinian orders persons convicted of a rape, their accomplices and assistants, to be beheaded. Seq. Raptores, l. 9. Cod. tit. 13.

2. Though all these species of lust are against nature, there are other crimes, which above the rest destroy all the ends and purposes of nature, and they are distinguished by the name of lust against nature. Of these sins Tertullian says, "they are monsters, not crimes."—l. de Pudic., c. 5. Of these sins are reckoned three distinct species; the first is the sin of Onan, or self-pollution, *i. e.*, a voluntary shedding of the human seed. This crime destroys all the ends of nature, is an anticipated murder, and, if habitual in youth, the bane of manhood, tending to destroy fruitfulness in marriage, and health and life itself by slow decays. Secondly, the sin of Sodom, which is committed between persons of the same sex. Persons convicted of this crime were condemned to be burned alive, according to the

repeated laws of the first Christian emperors. Lege 6, tit. 7, l. 9, Cod. Theodos. The laws of all civilized nations chastise it with death. The old penitential canons extend its penance, without the benefit of the sacraments, during the whole life of the penitent, till the article of death. Thirdly, bestiality, or carnal commerce with brutes, is a crime still more execrable.

3. These are complete species of this vice; but all imperfect acts, whether of thought, word, looks, kisses, or other actions, are grievous mortal sins, and belong to that species to which they imperfectly tend; whence, in case of thoughts, glances, &c., it is necessary to express the object in confession, whether it was a maid, a married woman, &c. For, both the positive divine law, and the law of nature, command the most perfect purity of mind and body, which is sullied by the least vapour of voluntary impurity. To preclude all pretence or plea of ignorance, God, who forbade this crime in the sixth commandment, added another distinct commandment to condemn all lustful desires or thoughts. And our blessed Saviour declares, that he who looks at a woman with lust, or wilful danger thereof, has already committed the crime with her in his own heart. Matt. v. 28. Hence, divines generally teach, that in impurity nothing can be so small or light as to be excused from the guilt of a mortal sin, if it be fully deliberate. St. Antoninus seems to pronounce this of faith, part. 2, tit. 5, c. 1. And Pope Alexander VII. condemned, as an error, the following assertion, Prop. 40: "It is a probable opinion, that a kiss given for the sake of a carnal and sensible delight, without any danger of farther consent, or of pollution, is no more than a venial sin." In most other points of morality, indeed, an abatement is made so far, that it is on all hands agreed, that the point on which the offence is committed may be so small, that the offence will not be deemed a mortal sin. Thus, though theft or injustice be a mortal sin, yet if it be in a matter so trifling as a penny, the sin is not ordinarily reputed mortal. So neither in a slight anger, in an officious or excusive lie, or the like. But the case is different in respect to purity, as the holy Scriptures and the tradition of the Church demonstrate. Indeed, the light of nature, or reason, suffices to show this. For, this virtue is so infinitely tender, that it fades and dies if blown upon by the least vapour. The very least allowance here is an immediate and violent occasion of farther consent. As St. Austin observes, lust is a passion, "to which, if no resistance be made, it commits the most enormous impurities;" l. 4. contra Julian,

c. 5. Were it but on this account, that the seeking of any immediate occasion of sin is a mortal sin, the least deliberate liberty in this passion must necessarily be such.

4. Any deliberate thoughts of impurity, though consented to but for one moment, are mortal sins. The law of Christ is holy, and forbids the least irregularity even in the mind or heart only. God requires at your hand an entire and spotless sacrifice, no less so in the interior than in the exterior. It is from our thoughts that our spiritual life and death begin and take their rise. As the grace, which first begins our conversion and our virtue, is a good thought, so the first step to our fall is a bad thought, which we listen to and harbour. The Son of God places evil thoughts at the head of all crimes, because all others begin by them. They are the source. "From the heart come," &c.—Matt. xv. 18. If this be true in theft, murder, and the like sins, it is infinitely more so in impurity, in which there can be no wilful thought, which is not mortal and dangerous. These sins of thought are the more to be shunned, because they easily multiply themselves without number. For one exterior, a man may commit a thousand interior sins. In these neither shame nor want of opportunity is any hindrance, whensoever passion prompts to them. In external sins a man is often tired and deterred by remorse, disquietude, and distaste. Thoughts are sins of all ages and conditions, of all times and places. Nor do they strike so much horror. Alas! how many never scruple at them! never perceive or take notice of them! seldom confess or repent of them! seldom resist or arm themselves against them! Many grievously deceive themselves about sinful thoughts, who imagine desires only to be such. But God teaches us, that every thought of any impure, unlawful object, entertained with wilful pleasure, is a mortal sin. Some chaste, timorous souls are apt, indeed, to carry their fears too far, and to be disquieted because they had perceived the proposal of an evil thought made by the enemy in their mind, though they never wilfully entertained it. We must distinguish, first, the involuntary suggestion; secondly, the pleasure; thirdly, the consent to the pleasure or thought; fourthly, the desire or resolution of carrying it into execution. The first is no sin; nor the second, if the will totally refuse its consent to it. A governor of a city may receive a letter of solicitation to treachery, without any fault: if he reject the proposal with abhorrence, and immediately throw the letter into the fire, he will deserve a recompense from his prince, not the

punishment due to treason, of which he never entertained the least thought. St. Catherine of Sienna had been a long time molested with a violent temptation of evil thoughts, when Jesus by his presence chased away the enemy, and assured her that he had been all that time in her heart.

5. If immodest thoughts are criminal, looks, words, or actions are also certainly so. The sight is the quickest of all the senses, and makes, of all others, the most sudden, the deepest, and the strongest impression upon the heart. And it is in this passion that it principally triumphs; innumerable souls have perished by one single glance of the eye. "Gaze not upon a maiden, lest her beauty be a stumbling block to thee."—Eccl. ix. 5. "Look not round about thee in the ways of the city, nor wander up and down in the streets thereof. Turn away thy face from a woman dressed up, and gaze not about upon another's beauty."—Ib., v. 7, 8. "For many have perished by the beauty of a woman; and thereby lust is kindled as a fire."—v. 9. And Christ declares: "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart."—Matt. v. 28. Upon which words St. Chrysostom, preaching on the crime of assisting at the stage entertainments, spoke thus to his flock: "But you will say, what if I do not look to lust? And how will you be able to persuade me this? For he who will not refrain from the look, how will he be able to remain free from a wound in his soul? Is your body a stone? Is it iron? You are encompassed with flesh; I say, with human flesh, which is more easily kindled from concupiscence than straw catches the flame. Are you more virtuous or strong than so many great and stout men, who have perished by a single cast of the eye? Have you not heard Solomon saying, Prov. vi. 27, 28: "Shall a man walk upon coals of fire, and not burn his feet? Shall a person bind up fire in his bosom, and not burn his clothes?" The saint then, in very strong terms, denounces a terrible excommunication against those who should for the future frequent the theatre. Hom. contr. Ludos et Theat. pp. 274, 275, t. 6, ed. Montfauc. St. Clement of Alexandria observes, from those words of Christ, that he who looks upon a woman sins on account of the danger: "But we are to refer all beauty to its author, the great Creator, who shows his perfect glory to his angels."—Strom., l. 4, p. 520. No one pretends to condemn transient necessary looks of civility, or even to take notice of beauty, providing there be no danger to the heart; but it is always a crime to look at the face of others with lust, or

with danger of that vice. Now transient glances are accompanied with this danger, if they proceed from idle curiosity, or from fondness to the person. To fix the eye upon another by a steady look is always a mark of the highest impudence and immodesty. Whence the rule of the Dominican friars says: "Cursed is the man who fixes his eye." And St. Austin writes: "You may cast your eyes on any one, but fix them on none."—Ep. 211, al. 109.

Some pretend that by custom they are not moved at any sight of such objects; that they never reflect on them; and, therefore, to them they can be noways dangerous. But are their eyes so naturalized to them, that their hearts are also become insensible? What a depth of corruption does this insolent plea discover! How long must the eyes have been already criminal before a man arrives at this pitch of stupidity and blindness! By what a series of sin, by what a course of vice must a person have made himself insensible to the guilt which his heart never ceases to commit! How inconsistent is his plea, that a familiarity with carnal objects can at length make the eyes chaste! Let such persons listen to St. Augustine: "Do not tell me that your hearts are chaste, if your eyes are unchaste. The lustful eye is the harbinger of an unclean heart."—St. Aug. Ep. 211, al. 109. And again: "Art thou stronger than David?"—In Ps. 50. Alas! such, however they may flatter themselves, live in a circle of sins, which they study to disguise to themselves: they have eyes filled with adulteries, and with never-ceasing sin, according to the expression of St. Peter: "having eyes full of adultery and unceasing vice."—1 Pet. ii. 14. St. Ambrose vehemently declaims against the crime of gazing, and says: "If women on a transitory glance are smitten, what must be consequence of a fixed look?"—l. 1, de. Pœnit., c. 13, t. 4, p. 361. St. Chrysostom (Hom. 17. in Matt. v.) writes: "Do not let me hear you say, that though you looked you were not smitten. The law is clear, and needs no comment." He adds: "Glances, if allowed, would often kill the soul; therefore, Christ forbade them. We take a sword out of the hands of a child, because it is dangerous, and lest he should hurt himself with it."

6. They are involved in the same guilt, who, by their immodest dress, invite the glances of others, as St. Clement of Alexandria remarks (Pœdag., l. 2, c. 2, p. 158), and Tertullian (l. de Velanda Virgin.), St. Cyprian (l. de Habitu Virginum), and other Fathers, have proved in entire books and sermons. St. Paul

orders all women to be covered in churches, out of respect to the angels, the invisible ministers of God (1 Cor. xi. 10); though they have neither eyes of flesh, nor hearts capable of our weaknesses; but because they are jealous of purity in us. Many say that by their dress they mean no harm. But how will they persuade others to this, though they persuade it to themselves? Many will ascribe their love of dress to its natural cause, the vanity, levity, or wantonness of the heart. Indeed, who can be nice in this particular? who can deviate from the rules of simplicity and gravity in clothing, which both nature and the Gospel point out, were it not through a notorious corruption of the heart? A man's exterior is the index of his interior. It is usual for persons to deceive themselves, and to disguise their own hearts from themselves, especially in the case of any favourite passion, which throws a cloud before their eyes. In this case, others will pass a much better judgment on their real sentiments than they themselves upon their own. Everybody else will read in their eyes, in their carriage, in their words, and in all their actions, the secret passions of their souls, which they themselves cannot, or rather will not, discern or own. St. Chrysostom pronounces this to be the case of those, who excuse to themselves an affected passion for dress, and thinks that it announces, in a language that cannot deceive, a great interior disorder of the mind, a wantonness and levity of the heart. But suppose it did not spring from such a passion, it would still not be free from a heinous malice; because it is a snare laid for the chastity of others. And the evil would be less, if such instruments of sin threw their poison only into corrupted hearts, of which the world is full; this would be only the adding of a new weight to those who were already casting themselves headlong into hell. But what have the elect children of God done, that human beings should assist the devil in laying stratagems to seduce and destroy them? For, by their immodest dress, into how many young hearts, into how many innocent bosoms do they strike a poignard, or cast their poisoned darts! St. Cyprian, l. de Disciplina et Habitu Virginum.

"You call yourself a virgin; but your dress and your studied ornaments prove the contrary. She is certainly not a Christian virgin, whose study it is to excite carnal love."—Ibid.

"Those costly ornaments and affected dress, those lures of beauty denote a prostitute, not a modest woman. In general, the best dressed women are not the most chaste. What a madness it is to trifle with whatever was and ever will be fatal! You have

seen others fall; how can you flatter yourself that you shall escape?"—St. Cyprian, l. de Discip. et Hab. Virg.

"You are at the devil's gate, you are a deserter from the flock of Christ. You ruined those whom the devil dared not to attack. You have seduced man, the image of his God. Such are the effects of your meretricious attire."—Tertullian, l. de Cultu Fœminarum, c. 1.

"A young man having conceived a violent love for a woman he had accidentally seen, was determined at any rate to enjoy her. She refused to listen to his solicitations, alleging that nothing should prevail upon her to violate that chastity, which she had consecrated to Jesus Christ. But hearing that her resistance had put him into a violent rage, and endangered his life, she had recourse to the following stratagem. She cut off her hair, and having besmeared her face with mud, sent for him, and addressed him thus: "Canst thou be in love with this loathsome figure?" This had such an effect upon him, that, returning to his better senses, he renounced his lustful purpose, and became an eminent pattern of chastity. St. Isidorus Pelusiota, Ep. 55, l. 2, Bibl. Patr., t. 4, p. 528.

"A lady of high rank, married to Hymentius, the uncle of the virgin Eustochium, was prevailed upon to dress her hair, and put on her richest attire, to conquer the virgin's virtue and the mother's care. When behold, that very night she was visited by an angel, threatening in angry terms: 'Hadst thou the impudence to prefer thy husband's desire to the law of Christ? Were thy sacrilegious hands employed to lay snares for the virgin? Those hands shall now wither, and thou shalt be taught by excruciating torments the heinousness of thy crime.' Five months were scarcely elapsed when she made a miserable end, and sunk into hell flames."—St. Jerome, l. 2, Ep. 7.

7. Persons guilty of this crime usually say for their excuse, that it is the business of others to guard against their own hearts, and take heed to themselves. But do not the laws of justice and charity condemn those who lay a stumbling-block in their way? St. Paul reproaches those who, by eating what was certainly lawful, scandalized the weak, as guilty of their spiritual murder. "Lead not to perdition a man, for whom Christ died."—Rom. x. 19. Destroy not the work of God, and the work of Christ's redemption, to content your appetite. How much more intolerable is it to destroy souls for the most idle and criminal vanity? Such persons sufficiently condemn their own intention, when they

are forced to own that they dress in order to please others. For how can they fix the limits of how far they shall please? God will one day judge and revenge the loss of other souls by such scandals, and the crime of this intolerable vanity. "The Lord said: Because the daughters of Sion are haughty, and have walked with stretched out necks, and wanton glances of their eyes, the Lord will make bald the crown of the head of the daughters of Sion; will take away the ornaments of shoes, and little moons, and chains, and necklaces, and bracelets, and bonnets, and bodkins, and ornaments of the legs, and sweet-balls, and ear-rings, and rings, and jewels hanging on the forehead; and changes of apparel, and short cloaks; and fine linen, and crisping-pins, and looking-glasses, and lawns, and head-bands and fine veils. And instead of a sweet smell, there shall be a stench, and instead of a girdle, a cord, and instead of curled hair, baldness, and instead of a stomacher, hair-cloth. Thy fairest men, also, shall fall by the sword, and thy valiant ones in battle. And her gates shall lament and mourn, and she shall sit desolate on the ground."—Isa. iii. 16, 26. Almighty God here, by his prophet, reckoning up the superfluous vanity of apparel, used by the youth, denounces, in punishment thereof, speedy death, stench, baldness, maggots, wars, and the desolation of their country. St. Chrysostom writes upon that passage: "By all these things, by the eyes, by the garments, by the feet, by the gait, the chastity or wantonness of the soul betrays itself. Drunk with the passion of lust, and like madmen, they have left nothing untried or undefiled; but have extended their brutal passion to their very dress, and to their carriage. But if these crimes were so severely reproached and punished before the law of grace, what must they expect who are now called to heaven, to more noble triumphs, and to the imitation of the angels, and who received greater succours to overcome this base crime. As our honours are greater, so also will our chastisements be; far greater than those of Sodom and Gomorrah; and the more grievous because they are totally reserved for the world to come."—In Isaiah, c. 3, pp. 44, 55, 46, t. 6, ed. Mountfaucon. We testify a respect to others with whom we converse, by using clothes decent and neat; but must remember that they are to cover our nakedness, the remnant of sin. This reflection ought to make us use them with confusion, remembering the miseries of our condition and fall, and with that simplicity which suits a penitential state; far from making dress the lure of sin.

Divines condemn as guilty of mortal sins, young women that go with their breasts bare, and necks all naked, or covered so slightly that they only invite bolder glances, and wound hearts more dangerously. Of such light handkerchiefs or coverings St. Jerome writes, "that by them the body is clothed to be made more naked."—Ep. ad Lætam. "Behold a woman dressed out in all her finery to entrap souls."—Prov. vii. 10.

8. If such be the custom of any country, St. Antoninus writes of it: "Such a fashion is shameful and immodest, and must not be followed."—2 part. tit. 4, cap. 5, s. 3. And divines say, that as long as women have lived in such a custom, so long have they lived in a habit of mortal sin, and are bound to repeat their confessions. See Collet, p. 301.

Eadmer writes (l. 1. Historiæ Novorum), that when St. Anselm came into England, being called to govern the metropolitan see of Canterbury, the young noblemen of the court were accustomed to perfume and deck their hair in a very effeminate manner. Wherefore, on Ash-Wednesday, he preached a sermon against such an abuse, and put a great number, who addressed themselves to him as penitents for the fact, under a course of public penance, having first, with his own hand, cut and spoiled their curled locks. Those who refused to renounce that infamous effeminacy, he would not admit to the ashes, and forbade them to be admitted to absolution or the sacraments. He condemned that custom in a Council of all England at London, can. 23. St. Charles Borroméo, in the visitation of his diocese, seeing a lady in a certain village immodestly dressed out, after severely rebuking her, said: "O unhappy woman! you think of setting yourself off by your dress, who will not live to see to-morrow morning in this world." The next morning she was found dead in her bed.

To paint the face is, according to divines, ordinarily a mortal sin, unless it be excused by being so little as not to be of much consequence; because, either by an express intention, or at least interpretatively, it spreads a snare to others' chastity, and is always a lie in contempt of the Creator. "They offer violence to their Creator, who think they can improve his work, forgetting that we came into the world from the hands of God, which none but the devil would presume to change."—St. Cyprian, l. de Habitu Virginum. "They offend God who are not satisfied with his work."—Tertul., l. de Cultu Fœminarum. See St. Gregory Naz., Or. adv. Mulieres sese ornantes, p. 889, et Carm. de se, p. 285. St. Ambrose, l. 1. de Virgin., t. 5, p. 582.

9. Kisses, touches of the hand, and the like liberties, may be innocent, if done out of civility, according to the custom of the country, and without danger of any impure delight; but the least mixture of impurity, or the immediate danger thereof, renders them lustful and grievous sins. A certain organical pleasure, such as is found in touching the skin of infants, arising merely from the conformity of the sense of touch with the smoothness of the object, may be exempt from sin. But kisses or similar actions, which are not salutations of civility, or the like, are always faulty, and extremely dangerous; and among adult young persons, at least if frequent or long continued, always mortal sins. Athenagoras, a primitive learned father, in his "Apology of the Christian Religion," tells the pagans, p. 37: "Among us, to look lasciviously upon a woman is a crime like adultery; nor are salutes to be communicated by a kiss, unless a pious salutation of courtesy or token of respect; which, if it be in the least defiled by any impure thought, alienates a man from eternal life." A chaste person is bound to keep the most strict watch over all his senses, so as to be irreproachable in the least thing; the least liberty taken by any one with him raises a horror in his soul, and he flies where there is the least appearance of any enemy. Salutes, or even touches of the hands, unless excused by necessity, often proceed from wantonness; in which case they are evidently mortal sins; if that be not their corrupt source, they tend at least exceedingly to inflame it. St. Basil compares them to red hot iron, the touch of which cannot but raise blisters in the flesh; such do these liberties leave in the soul. Purity is the flower of virtues, the beauty of souls, and the ornament of bodies; but then it is a delicate and tender flower; the least sun scorches it, the least wind destroys it. These levities in behaviour, these indecent familiarities, and in women, this desire to please, to be flattered and adored, are called by St. Jerome* "signs of expiring virginity." Such persons may boast that they triumph over adultery, or escape the utmost excess; but in the mean time, by these criminal liberties, they fall daily a prey to hell, and give reason to fear that they would go farther, did not worldly honour, not virtue, restrain them. Gerson says of salutes and touches of the hand, l. de Confess. Mollitici, p. 454, t. 2: "They are hot embers, which the devil will soon blow up into a dreadful conflagration."

10. In these things we are to distinguish persons who are of a

* Morituræ virginitatis indicia.

timorous and scrupulous conscience in this point, and worldly persons. The former are to be ordered to despise things which displease them, and which necessity occasions; nor are they too scrupulously to omit good, or even indifferent but honourable actions, on account of their excessive fears; because this fear is the cause of their temptations on such occasions; and they are best overcome by not regarding it, as St. Antoninus observes.

But in actions really dangerous, and always in the case of worldly persons, the rule is, that all persons do study to lean the scale against themselves in every doubt or deliberation; for so great is the blindness of self-love, and so violent is the sympathy of the will with the sensitive appetite, that iniquity easily lies to itself, and deceives the heart. We are to remember that purity is a virtue which may be lost by any of the senses of the body, or faculties of the soul; wherefore, our watchfulness must be universal. "Let your eyes, your tongue, your ears be chaste; for they are all apt to lead you astray."—St. Greg. Naz., Carm. ad Virgines, p. 798. "Be assured that there is nothing light, nothing trifling in vice. Resist manfully the first attacks, if you wish to secure yourself from the most fatal impressions."—Ib. p. 809.

It would be a rash and scandalous assertion among Catholic divines, should any one advance that the least deliberate act in impurity is not a mortal sin. "In impurity," says the great William of Paris, "nothing is light, nothing is venial." Those, then, who count the liberties of which we are speaking as trifles, evidently deceive themselves. Whosoever desire to preserve their chastity free from stain must study to converse with others, especially of the other sex, as if they were angels, or without bodies, with the utmost modesty and watchfulness over all their senses. A certain virtuous lady used to say, that she learned by experience how dangerous and vicious the free conversation of persons of different sexes is, from this circumstance, that whenever any young man had begun to converse with her, she found that she could almost persuade him anything, or gain anything from him.

11. I must also add, that the law of chastity obliges all young persons to shun all frequent interviews or private familiarities with persons of another sex. "Woman robs man of his precious soul."—Prov. vi. 26. "Can a man hide fire in his bosom, and his garments not be burnt? or can he walk on hot coals, and his feet not be burnt?"—Ib. v. 27, 28. "I find woman to be worse than death; she is the huntsman's noose, her heart is a net, her

hands are fetters; the man who loves God will avoid her."—Eccles. vii. 27. A woman's charms are so many imperceptible chains which bind the heart; her eyes are like the basilisk, which kills by its looks. See Prov. xvii. 14. Her touches are more dangerous than the most venomous serpent. Joseph left his torn garment in the hands of his impudent mistress, rather than suffer her to touch him. St. Jerome says he fled as at the bite of a ravenous wild beast, and glad to leave behind him the part of the garment which she had touched, lest the poison should diffuse itself. L. 1. adv. Helvid. "Her conversation burns like a fire."—Eccl. ix. 11. "Avoid the company of a woman who is not thy wife."—V. 12.

12. The Fathers repeat often this lesson, and in the strongest terms: "Fly as much as possible the conversation of women. If necessity compel you sometimes to it, hold your eyes cast down on the ground; and when you have spoken as little as may be required, immediately fly away."—St. Isidore of Pelusium, B. 2, Ep. 284. None have more to fear in this point than those who rely and presume the most confidently on their own resolutions and strength. "Do you think yourselves insensible to female attractions? What then prevents you being in heaven? To such the apostle addresses himself, 1 Cor. iv.: 'You are now satisfied, you are become rich, you reign without us, at least I wish you may.' This is a state of probation, and woman scatters death around her. To her, many owe their ruin. In spite of their confessions, their victories, and even their miracles, they have fatally perished by trusting themselves in this frail bark. How many lions have been tamed by weak, delicate women?"—Auctor Libri de Singularitate Clericorum, inter op. St. Cypriani.

"To live always with a woman, and not to sin by the woman, is something greater than to raise a dead person to life. You cannot do that which is less, and how would you have me to do that which is greater?"—St. Bern., Serm. 65. in Cant. n. 4. "Trust not to thy former success. Thou art neither stronger than Sampson, nor more holy than David, nor wiser than Solomon. Never forget that a woman banished the first man from paradise. Never be alone with a woman in private."—St. Jer., Ep. ad Nepotianum. We read in Genesis, xxxiv., the misfortune of Dina, who going abroad out of curiosity and complaisance, so natural to her age and sex, lost her chastity, and drew upon her whole family, and on two nations, great sorrow, infamy, and desolation, with much perfidy and bloodshed; which example the Fathers

frequently make use of, to inculcate the obligation of young maidens keeping at home, and never being allowed to see company, or stir abroad, unless with great reserve, and under a safeguard and protection. On which account the Hebrews called a virgin Aalma, or one hidden or concealed. A contrary education, besides exposing young women to daily occasions of ruin, inspires them with a most dangerous spirit of curiosity, vanity, and wandering, fruitful in many evils during their whole lives, and contrary to virtue and the decency of their sex and condition; which the very heathen dramatists teach. See Sophocles, Ajax, p. 35, &c. St. Gregory the Great, in his Dialogues, mentions a holy man named Ursinus, who, with the consent of his consort, had embraced an ascetic state, and entered into orders: when he lay dying, his wife came to visit him; he no sooner saw her enter his cell, than he cried out with great vehemence, though in great agony: "Take away that stubble, or it will soon catch fire." St. Arsenius said to a Roman lady, who came to recommend herself to his prayers: "I will beg of God that I may never think of thee." B. Roger, one of the companions of St. Francis, refusing to see his own mother, said: "When a man does what in his power lies, God will do his part on his side; but if a man throw himself into the danger, especially in so dangerous and slippery a matter as this of chastity, God leaves him to his own strength, by which he will never be able long to stand his ground." B. Giles used to say to the same purpose: "Chastity is a bright and clear mirror, which is tarnished with the least breath, or by the sight." The lives of the saints are full of such maxims and examples. Nor did any one ever preserve his chastity who departed from them. Those saints long practised in the school of virtue, strengthened by the most perfect habits, dead to themselves and to their senses, by the most mortified lives, found these excessive precautions necessary, not to awaken their domestic enemy; yet men, who have none of these helps, cannot be made sensible of their own weakness. St. Chrysostom, ironically confounding such presumptuous persons, says: "Those strong men who converse familiarly with women, and yet find no danger, I must indeed call happy. I could wish for the gift of their strength."—L. contra Subintroductas, t. 1, p. 231. "You tell me, that though I see you frequently converse with a virgin, I am to look upon it as an affair of piety, not of concupiscence. O admirable man! that is the condition of those, who live among stones, not with men."—Ib., p. 235, t. 1, ed. Ben.

13. Some pretend that such a liberty is to be allowed between young persons before marriage. But those who visit different females, or the same without any intention of marriage, are most to blame, because such familiarities and private interviews, being contrary to the rules of decency, good manners, and religion, justly give scandal to others. It is in this circumstance that impudence shows how far the true maxims of virtue are banished out of the world. Some young persons openly call such liberties the privilege of their age, and even glory in them. The reign of vice must be strangely triumphant, indeed, when it has banished the most fundamental laws of modesty, and removed the last fence of virtue. Nature has given man a sense of the shame and infamy which attends every indulgence of this base passion; this he expresses by concealing and disguising from the world, even in its most lawful use, as St. Austin observes. But this barrier is broken down by the impudent conduct of youth in this point, in open defiance to modesty, religion, and the respect which is due to mankind. They pretend to cloak the crime under some soft name or other; but themselves alone do they deceive; no other person is taken by the lure. The passion is too glaring for men to be imposed upon. Let themselves be but judges in the case of others. Would not they condemn loudly, similar liberties in persons who have embraced a state of continency? But is not chastity a virtue, which all men are bound to practise, though some, to the general obligation, have added that of a vow to render it perpetual? Again, what married woman would be allowed such private interviews and company keeping? Would not these very persons be the first to censure so intolerable a conduct as infamous, scandalous, and criminal? Why? if it be not in itself dangerous and sinful. If you desire the benediction of God on your marriage, approach it with such purity that you may be able to say with Sarah: "I have kept my heart free from every stain."—Tob. vi.

14. This continued familiarity between young persons of different sexes necessarily produces a sensual and fond love. We may distinguish four kinds of love; viz., the spiritual, the natural, the sensual, and the carnal. That love of our neighbour, which is spiritual, holy, and Christian, is a gift of God, an effect of divine charity, and a flame of that divine fire which the Holy Ghost kindles in our hearts, which makes us love a person purely in God, and for God, *i. e.*, with the simple view of our salvation, and of the honour of God. In this charity there

is a special love of friendship which divine charity forms, and which is a mutual spiritual succour of virtue, a comfort, and an egregious fruit of charity. Christ himself showed this to be holy, and sanctified it by his divine friendship with St. John the Evangelist, and the rest of his apostles. The love which we call natural is engrafted in us by nature towards our parents, friends, benefactors, and all mankind, especially those in whom we see particular amiable qualities, or a sympathy with our temper, manners, and inclinations. This love, in itself, is rational and good, so long as it keeps within the bounds which reason and the law of God prescribe to it; but imperfect, unless it be ennobled, purified, and sanctified by the motives of supernatural charity, and the intentions of piety and grace. The sensual love is that which seeks the gratification of the senses; in which if it rest alone, even in a married state, it is sinful, and perverts the order established by God, making its own satisfaction its only and base motive. Carnal love is criminal, tending to, or seeking the unlawful gratification of the senses. So quick are the senses to catch a flame, and so close is their connexion with the powers of the soul, that even the most holy and spiritual love of our neighbour must be carefully governed and restrained from occasions, by which it would easily be corrupted, and degenerate into that which is carnal. The natural, and far more the sensual love, are infinitely dangerous on the same account, unless raised to the perfection of true charity by its more noble motives, and unless all the occasions, by which it may be corrupted, be carefully avoided. Gerson (l. de Distinctione Visionum, t. 1, p. 56) says: "Nothing is more subtle or dangerous than personal affections, which insensibly become carnal;" if encouraged by private conversations, &c.

15. The evil is the greater, because even carnal love, so long as it avoids what is entirely gross, flatters and disguises itself under the name of a holy and Christian love. Persons say they love others for their virtues; it is true, nothing is more just than that virtue should challenge the tribute of our praise and affection.

But then the manner in which we love is also to be holy, spiritual, and like that of the angels. If the concupiscence of the sensual part of the soul creeps into the affection, it is perverted and becomes criminal, and a dangerous source of many sins. No one loves another unless he sees, or imagines that he sees, in said person amiable qualities and virtues. Nay, such is

the fascination of sensual love, that a person enslaved by it fancies every virtue and charm in the beloved object, and brightens even faults into perfections. Wherefore, the perfections of the object no way excuse what is inordinate in it. Let us consider the marks by which a love is known to be already what we call a carnal and vicious love. They are thus described by St. Bonaventure, l. 2. de Profectu Religiosorum, c. 28 :—

"The first mark is, if a person find a particular pleasure in conversing with another on idle subjects, spend with pleasure, or desire to spend hours with him in such trifling discourse, is torn from him with violence and repugnance; for nothing could make such a converse agreeable, or even tolerable, were it not a secret sensual satisfaction which is found in it.

"A second mark is, if the person talk in such conversation about vain, frivolous, and unprofitable things, especially if with assurances of his affection, of the fidelity and constancy of his love, and the like idle impertinences. To all such endearments, frequent little idle presents, tender letters, and the like things, which are intended to keep up a flame, holy love is a stranger. 'To frequent presents, ribbands, caps, delicacies, and tender letters.'—St. Jerome, Ep. ad Nepotian.

"A third sign is a licentious freedom in actions, gestures, stolen glances, flattering words, and whatsoever transport of inordinate love. Spiritual love is reserved and modest in all its gestures, looks, and words, and converses among men with the purity of angels.

"A fourth sign is disquietude, uneasiness, and disturbance of mind in the other's absence; impatience to see him; a continual remembrance of him; *i. e.*, if filling one's mind with his remembrance, perpetually entertaining it upon him, passionately desiring news about him, asking often and earnestly of him, and the like; if he run in the mind, even at prayers and on all occasions. Such symptoms betray a mind disturbed, and a heart agitated with the waves of an irregular passion of love. Spiritual love thinks of another with tranquillity; remembers him at prayer only to pray for him: feels no emotions but such as are moderate and calm.

"A fifth mark is a jealousy, which suffers no rival or partner, but is moved to indignation if the person beloved seem to speak to, or salute another more kindly, or to bear to any other a greater affection; it even turns its aversion against that person who shares the regard of the beloved, speaks against him, and

shows on every occasion an antipathy and prepossession. On the contrary, spiritual love rejoices to see all others loved with ourselves; it extends itself to many, and increases as it is multiplied, as fire is more kindled the more fuel is thrown upon it.

"The sixth mark is, that a person has his eyes shut to the faults and imperfections of the other, excuses those which can admit no excuse, and discovers a blindness in his favour; spiritual love excuses what charity directs to be excused, but condemns and seeks to correct all real faults."

16. The excessive dangers and the complicated evil and malice of these fond affections are greater than can be summed up in words. First, it is inconceivable what suspicions, talk, and insinuations they produce in a neighbourhood; often quarrels, detractions, slanders, jealousies, &c. Secondly, being sensual they seek to indulge and gratify themselves in pleasing the senses, and by inflaming the evil desires of the heart set no bounds to them, and entirely stifle and silence reason. Thirdly, they leave the most dangerous and criminal impressions on the imagination, fill the mind with evil ideas, and the heart with the most violent bad affections and inclinations.

These fondnesses are the more dangerous, because they arise from small sparks, and make their progress imperceptibly till the whole soul is in a flame. This friendship, in its commencement, is no more than a just esteem of a person perhaps truly valuable and amiable, and an esteem founded on his modesty, prudence, virtue, and other qualifications. In this they apprehend no danger, see no harm; but it is the greater, because secret and unperceived. On which account all the Fathers and all the prudent directors of souls are extremely severe and peremptory in warning against the beginnings of this evil. But persons here deceive themselves, counting upon their good intentions, their firm resolutions, their irreproachable conduct. In this presumption they seek one another's company, and hold long conversations together, and think themselves safe because they most cautiously shun any glances, or whatever is unbecoming in their behaviour. But this mutual confidence, this indulgence strengthens the passion, and they are not sensible how deeply they are wounded, how fast down they are bound, until they begin to attempt a separation. When they find how much this costs, they cry out, that they never imagined their heart was gone so far. But, when they find themselves assaulted by fouler ideas, they still blind themselves, and say that, as they carefully resist them,

there is no sin. But can those be excused, who wilfully put the occasions, and who, though advertised of the danger, yet despise it? They listen not to the oracle: "He that loves danger shall perish in it." Had they a sincere and effectual resolution, they would instantly pluck out an eye, cut off a hand, rather than play with a serpent. While they neglect this, their resolution is that half-will of St. Austin before his conversion, when he prayed to be disengaged from his sinful affections, yet seemed afraid in his heart lest God should hear him. Ah! the beginnings of all sensible and tender attachments are to be cut off; they are most pernicious and dangerous even to the most mortified and the most perfect. The fire is kindled, and, though hid, yet very violent. The best intentions are no excuse. The angel of Satan here transforms himself easily into an angel of light.

17. A learned bishop, in a work printed among those of St. Thomas of Aquin (Opusc. 64. 1. de Modo Confitendi), writes thus on this subject: "This cruel disturbance of the mind prevents its application to prayer, which purifies, enlightens, enlivens, strengthens, and invigorates; whereas, carnal love depresses the spirits, clouds, sinks, and weakens the soul. The body feels the effects of this impression. Though carnal affection be always dangerous, it is particularly fatal to spiritual persons, especially when settled on a person of apparent virtue. For the motive seems to be unexceptionable; still a frequent intercourse produces private danger and real evil. As this affection increases, the original motive is weakened, and the parties fall. This is not perceived at first; but experience will soon convince them, that instead of angels, as they first appeared, they are become mere mortals. Their conversation is loose and tender, their devotion disappears, they are impatient of a separation, they adore each other's personal advantages, and their pious friendship degenerates into carnal love. The late hour, the call of duty are forgotten, and it is with difficulty that they consent to part. What they feel on these occasions should convince them, that their connexions are merely carnal, and very different from spiritual love. It is a saying of St. Jerome: 'Tarry not under the same roof with a woman; trust not to thy former success; for thou art neither as strong as Sampson nor as wise as Solomon. If you tell me that your flesh is crucified, I answer that the devil is still alive, and that his breath will soon blow up the smothered embers into a flame.' Again, St. Augustine says: 'Let thy discourse with women be short and guarded. They are not the less dangerous

because they are pious. Their virtues only render them more amiable, and their smooth tongue will carry the poison of lust to thy heart. Believe me, I am a bishop, and I am talking to a bishop, whom I should be ashamed to deceive. I have found, by long experience, that the lofty cedars of Lebanon, that the saints of the desert could not stand this trial, though I never had the smallest reason to question the sincerity of their intentions, nor should have hesitated to compare them to a Jerome or an Ambrose.' Hear St. Bernard: 'You are fond of the company of women, and do you think I can account you chaste? But I will suppose it; at least you excite suspicion, and are guilty of the sin of scandal.'"—p. 105, t. 18, op. St. Thomæ.

18. St. Francis of Sales writes against the pretence of those, who flatter themselves that they will restrain fond affections from what is criminal, and therefore think they are to be indulged within certain bounds. "But you will say, I will entertain some of this love, not all. Alas! you deceive yourself; this fire of love is more active and piercing than you imagine. You calculate upon receiving but a spark; and you will wonder to see that in a moment it will have possessed your whole heart, reduced all your resolution to ashes, and your reputation to smoke. The Wise Man crieth out: "Who will have compassion on an enchanter stung by a serpent? And I cry after him: Fools and madmen, do you think to charm love, so as to be able to manage it at pleasure? You would play with it, but it will bite and sting you cruelly."—Introduction, part 3, c. 18, 19. "Cry aloud to every one fallen into the snares of wanton love; cut, break, and tear them; stand not dallying to rip up these foolish amities; they must be torn; untie not the knots, but break and cut them. We must not be favourable to a love so contrary to the love of God."—c. 21.

19. Some persons may think me too severe in these articles. To this what other answer can I give but to cry out with tears in the words of the great St. Austin: "The most shameful transgressions, the most atrocious crimes, if suffered to grow into habits, soon lose their deformity, and become familiar. They are no longer concealed, but are held out to the practice of others."—Enchir., c. 80, t. 6, ed. Ben. p. 227. And, in another place: "Wretched is the condition of men, whom none but uncommon crimes alarm. The sins we see daily committed cost the blood of the Son of God; they shut the gates of heaven against us, and still they make but a slight impression on us."—In Gal. iv. 11, t. 3, part 2, ed. Ben.

That Father, preaching on the strict purity which God required of all persons, whether in the state of virginity, widowhood, or marriage, says, that some, who found themselves guilty, were offended at his severity, and angry with him, to whom he answers, that God would demand an account for their sins of him, no less than of them, should he be silent: and that such a silence, by which he should betray his trust, could not save or spare them; that he, therefore, said to God: "I have preached, that you may spare them; do you convert them. Make the libertine chaste, that we may rejoice when we stand before thy judgment seat." Then, addressing himself to his people, he said: "Libertines, repent while ye are suffered to live. I may preach to you, but, if I preach in vain, it will not be in my power to acquit you on the last day, or to prevent your eternal damnation."—Serm. 132. olim. 47. de Verbis Domini, t. 5. ed. Ben. p. 637.

DISCOURSE LVIII.

ON THE REMEDIES AGAINST IMPURITY.

1. Purity is a virtue, which makes the soul of a man living on the earth a true heaven, because God, who delights in chaste minds, chooses his dwelling in them. This is the ivory throne of the true Solomon, Jesus Christ, the flowery bed of the divine spouse, and the garden planted with fair lilies, amidst which he is delighted to feed. It is a beautiful rose, surrounded indeed by thorns, but which, with its sweet scent, embalms both heaven and earth. Purity drew down the Divine Word from the bosom of the Father, in which he had rested from eternity, into the womb of Mary by his incarnation, and it daily draws him down into chaste souls by his singular graces. On the other hand, it raises corruptible creatures above what they are by nature, to the dignity of angels, places them near the throne of God, and possesses in heaven the privilege of following the Lamb wherever he goes, and of singing a new song unknown to the rest of the blessed. The highest crown due to this virtue is indeed reserved to its most perfect state, that of an unspotted virginity; but the glory of perfect virginity is forfeited by one single deliberate sin committed against it either in body or mind. "True Christian virginity must be immaculate in thought, and unsullied by lust."—

St. Jerome, l. 1. in Jovivian. "Virginity is a perfect and holy integrity.—St. Tho. 5. 2æ. q. 152, a. 1. Wherefore, St. Austin conjures all virgins to preserve a virtue, which, if lost, can never be retrieved in its utmost perfection: "Be careful, while you may, not to forfeit the gift of virginity; for it can never be recovered." —l. de Virginitate, c. 29, p. 355. But every degree of purity, in every state and condition, has its excellence and its merit; and it everywhere has its dangers and its combats. It therefore behoves every one to instruct himself in the means by which it is to be obtained, and to put on the arms by which its victories are to be gained.

2. Humility is laid down by the Fathers as the first, and, of all others, the most necessary means of obtaining and securing to ourselves this treasure of purity. Without humility, the most perfect chastity would be vicious, and only the game of pride. Whence St. Paul says: "Let him that glories, glory in the Lord." And the Fathers never cease to recommend to virgins, above all things, the most sincere humility, without which virginity itself becomes vicious. "We admire virginity," says the ancient Council of Gangres, held soon after the Council of Nice, "but if it be accompanied with humility."—Conc. t. 2, p. 423.

Pride not only robs chastity of its merit, but generally also makes it a prey to impurity. For though these two passions are entirely different in their nature, the one being a spiritual sin, the other carnal, yet the former commonly brings on the latter, and they are generally attendants one on the other. The devil having gained a soul by pride, easily strengthens his empire, by fettering her in the chains of lust. Hence, we see that persons who were before most chaste, no sooner fall from virtue by pride, than they find a furious passion of impurity beginning to annoy and make them its prey. One would think that pride should inspire men with a great abhorrence of this base passion, and that so foul a passion could not but keep the unchaste in sentiments of humility; yet, strange as it is, pride and impurity go usually hand in hand together. The reason is, that God, whose gift true purity is, withdraws his grace from the proud; whence they easily fall into the snares of this domestic enemy. Thus, does God often punish pride by this shameful sin. St. Paul shows this in the ancient heathen philosophers. We read that many of them who delivered excellent precepts of morality, and pretended to virtue, being puffed up with pride, fell from its rules in the practice, defiled and dishonoured themselves by the most

shameful and unnatural lusts. Plato, and others, the most famed amongst them for their morals, are said to have had their catamites. "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools; God gave them up to the desire of their heart, to uncleanness, to dishonour their own bodies among themselves. For this cause, God delivered them up to shameful passions, receiving in themselves the recompense which was due to their error."—Rom. i. 22, 26. Experience daily convinces us of the truth of this observation. Souls that glory in their pretended virtue, suddenly find this most ignominious passion flying in their faces. Whence, the Fathers and masters of a spiritual life lay down the most perfect humility, as the first and most essential means of obtaining and preserving the virtue of chastity. "If a virgin glory, she has perished," says St. Ambrose, l. de Virgin.

Labour against lust not only by bodily penance, but by prayer and spiritual virtues. Though thou fast, watch, and scourge thyself, thou shalt never possess cleanness and chastity without the gift of God. Without the grace of Jesus, and true humility thou wilt sooner kill thyself than kill carnal motions of lust, either in mind or body, says our devout countryman Hilton. Whence, St. Austin, labouring to obtain chastity, asked in order thereto the virtue of humility. "Grant me thy grace, O Lord! which, by giving me a sense of my weakness, will make me strong."

3. Humility is the mother of prayer. By filling us with a feeling sense of our unworthiness, nothingness, weakness, and essential dependence on God, it powerfully excites us most earnestly and assiduously to beg his holy grace. God is the author of every good gift; and prayer is the ordinary means, the channel by which his greatest graces are communicated to us. By this we are chiefly to obtain his supernatural strength against our spiritual enemies, and to arrive at the riches of virtue. This is more especially true of those virtues which necessarily require a special grace, being above the power of nature, as this of purity; of which the Wise Man says: "I knew that I could not otherwise be continent, except God gave it, and this also was a point of wisdom, to know whose gift it was."—Wisd. viii. 21. Which St. Austin and other Fathers understand principally of the virtue of chastity. "It is granted by God to those who seek it, who pray for it, who labour to obtain it."—St. Jerome, l. 3. in Mat. 19. Whence, St. Austin said of himself, when under the tyranny of impurity, before his conversion: "Thou wouldst grant me

continency, if I sincerely applied for it."—Conf., l. 6, c. 11. In this humility he placed his whole confidence in the divine mercy, and never ceased earnestly to implore it: "My only hope is in thy great mercy. O love, ever alive, ever warm! O my God! inflame my heart. Thou commandest me to be chaste; grant what thou commandest, and command what thou wilt."*—Conf. l. 10, c. 19, n. 40. Every one is bound to pray for grace against this, and all other vices. "As a city, which is not fenced with strong walls, easily falls into the power of enemies, because it has no means to repel them; so a soul, which is not strengthened by prayer, is easily made a prey by the devil. Prayer is her force against him;" says St. Chrysostom, l. de Orando Deum. But those who find their domestic enemy more troublesome must redouble their prayers and tears night and day against him. "If any of you should be assaulted by filthy thoughts," says St. Ephrem, "let him not fall into sloth, or abandon himself to despair; but let him pour forth his heart in the sight of God, and cry out incessantly, with sighs and tears: Arise, O Lord! and defend me, according to thy justice! I am the work of thy hands; withdraw not from me thy strength. Why dost thou turn away thy face? Why dost thou forget my poverty and weakness? because my enemy with fury pursues my soul to devour it."—l. 2, de Compunctione, c. 2. Let him thus cry out to God as often as he prostrates himself before him in holy prayer; and in all sudden temptations, in the time of battle.

4. Self-denial, and a spirit of docility, obedience, and humility, must subdue the mind by inward mortification; but the flesh is also to be tamed by fasting and abstinence. Of purity, we are to understand that oracle of truth: "It is not found in the land of those that live daintily."—Job, xxvi. 13. "Plants grow luxuriant on the banks of rivers, and the seeds of lust are rendered productive by the conversation of women. The man who denies nothing to his appetite, and proposes to lead a chaste life, is like him, who should attempt to stop the raging flames with a bridle. As the fire fed by dry wood cannot be kept under, so neither can lust be subdued while the body is pampered." St. Nilus, Or. 2. de Luxuria, Bibl. Patr., t. 4, p. 970. Intemperance and gluttony are the soil in which beastly lust grows and triumphs,

* Tota spes mea nonnisi in magna misericordia tua. O amor qui semper ardes, et nunquam extingueris, charitas, Deus meus, accende me. Continentiam jubes; da quod jubes, et jube quod vis.

as in Sodom: "This was the sin of Sodom; they were proud, intemperate, and slothful; and they were guilty of every abomination."—Ezech. xvi. God has appointed this mortification of the senses to be the means by which the rebellion of the flesh is to be resisted, and this enemy kept in subjection. Even St. Paul, "I chastise my body," &c.—1 Cor. ix. 7. Hence it is a maxim of all directors in a spiritual life, that it is impossible to preserve the virtue of chastity without a penitential and austere life. St. Francis of Assisium used to say, that as flesh is salted to be preserved from corruption, so is our body to be preserved from the stain of filthy lust by mortification; which he proved by the example of John the Baptist, though he was sanctified in his mother's womb, and strengthened in habits of innocence and virtue from his infancy. St. Chrysostom writes: "A crucified life is the root of chastity."—l. 1. de Virginit., c. 7. Chastity is likened in Holy Scripture to a rose, not only on account of its beauty and fragrance, but likewise because it groweth among sharp prickles; for chastity never groweth or flourisheth long, but in austerity of life and mortification of the flesh. It is always in danger among pleasures and delights of the flesh. It dieth unless it be maintained by fasting and temperance. It is as great a miracle to live chaste without abstinence, as it is to raise a dead man to life, as a great man writes. Wine, says St. Jerome, is to youth a poison, *i. e.*, if drunk pure or plentifully. "Wine is a luxurious beverage."—Prov. xx. "Be not drunk with wine, in which is luxury."—Ephes. v. 18.

5. Sloth is likewise reckoned by Ezechiel among the greatest resources of this sin in Sodom: c. xvi. Idleness is the mother of all vices, and the destruction of all virtues. God enjoined to all men to labour (Gen. iii. 44); for his words contain not a bare counsel, but a precept, as Calmet shows. Whence St. Jerome, in his epistles to ladies of quality, often repeats to them this lesson, and exhorts them never, except when employed in duties, to let go the loom or the wheel, adding, that thus the days will seem short, and that no alms to the poor would be a more agreeable sacrifice to Christ, than clothes or other necessaries wrought by their own hands. Among the ancient hermits, it was an essential rule that they should all be constantly employed, and each had his task of some penitential laborious work, as we see in their history, and in St. Austin's book de Opere Monachorum. Cassian mentions, that Abbot Paul, who lived at so great a distance in the desert that he could not send his work for sale, rigorously exacted of

himself a daily task, and at the end of the year burned all his work, and the palm tree leaves which he had gathered for it. Instit., l. 10, c. 24. All monks, who did not follow bodily labour, were always bound assiduously to employ themselves in copying books, or in preaching, and other spiritual functions; and this not only out of charity, but to satisfy the divine precept of labouring, and to avoid sloth, the source of all spiritual evils, especially of impurity. This the heathen poets understood:

"Call for your book and lamp before 'tis light,
And study both to know and do what's right;
Envy or lust will else torment your breast,
And you will seek your couch in vain for rest."*
Hor. Ep. l. 1.

"Bar idleness, you ruin Cupid's game,
You blunt his arrows, and you quench his flame.
The slothful he seeks out, and makes his prize,
Surely as he the man of business flies;
The adulterous lust that did Ægysthus seize,
And brought on murder, sprang from wanton ease."†
Ovid. de Remed. Amoris.

No sloth is more dangerous than that of excess in sleeping, or lying late in bed, especially awake. To rise early in the morning is a habit indispensably requisite to overcome this enemy. Gerson admonishes against this temptation, that persons never lie awake in bed one moment in the morning, but instantly arise with prayer, and that awaking in the night, they pray.

6. Under the temptation the first and capital lesson is, to resist, with the utmost vigour and speed, the first suggestion of the enemy.‡ Gerson observes, that under the temptation of this passion reason is clouded and disturbed by the movements of the sensitive appetite, so that it cannot think seriously of God, or the great motives of virtue; wherefore, if a man then begin to dally or to deliberate, he is certainly overcome. Moreover, God, offended at his sloth and infidelity, abandons him to fall a prey. Therefore, it is most profitable to him that he stir himself up

* Si non ante diem poscas librum cum lumine, si non
Intendes animum studiis et rebus honestis,
Invidia vel amore vigil torquebere.

† Otia si tollas, periere Cupidinis arcus,
Contemptæque jacent et sine luce faces.
Quæritur Ægysthus quare sit factus adulter?
In promptu causa est; desidiosus erat.

‡ Principiis obsta; sero medicina paratur
Cum mala per longas invaluere moras.

to serious attention, by the remembrance of some terrible object which may rouse his sloth; for no man would sin under any grievous temptation, if he believed that he should be immediately punished in some dreadful manner, but would awaken and cry out in dread: What am I going to do? Gerson, Remed. contra Recidivum.

The same author writes in another work: "The best of all remedies, according to the doctrine and the experience of the saints, is to resist the first appearance of temptation, as we would that of a material fire. For this purpose we should have in readiness some short prayers to be said, striking the breast, punishing some part of the body, or rising hastily from bed. Imitate the example of St. Bennet, St. Anthony, St. Bernard, St. Thomas, &c. A certain young man, when tempted, spit on the ground, and as if he saw the devil himself, 'Avaunt,' says he, 'thou wretched damned spirit, shall I hearken to thee, shall I offend my God, shall I pollute his temple with the filth of sin!' He next addressed his fervent prayers and supplications to God, to the saints, and angels. These prayers and reflections must often be repeated in a spirit of faith and humility, and with a proper sense of frailty: 'Create a clean heart in me, O God!'—Ps. 50. 'Inflame me with the fire of the Holy Ghost. O Virgin of virgins! pray for me.' 'Save me, O God! because the waters have reached my soul.'"—Ps. 68.—Gerson, l. de Confessione Mollitiei, t. 2, pp. 454, 455.

7. A person must take the utmost care not to lose courage under this temptation. Let it be ever so violent, by the divine grace our heart is always subject to us, we can always refuse our consent, and, consequently, gain a glorious victory over the enemy of our God, and of our own souls. "Consent not, and thy resistance shall be crowned."—St. Bernard, Serm. 5. in Quadrag., t. 1, p. 822. Though you should have increased the strength of your enemy by criminal habits, yet it is always in your power to resist and conquer, as St. Chrysostom wrote to one fallen into that gulf: "I know thou art weaker in thy resistance of the evil spirit; I know thou art sunk into the gulf of voluptuousness; but if you will say to the enemy, We despise thy pleasures, the root of all evil is removed; if thou raise thy eyes to heaven the temptation will cease, and in the fiery furnace thou shalt find a cool, refreshing breeze, and the flames shall not touch thy thoughts or thy conscience. Many a strong fortress, which no art nor machines could force, has been treacherously surrendered by a few of its inhabitants. If thy own thoughts do not betray thee,

no stratagem, no attack of the enemy will subdue thee."—L. 2. ad Theodorum Lapsum, t. 1, p. 39, ed. Ben.

8. The daily meditation of the passion of Christ, and of the last things, is a sovereign antidote against this temptation. "The vain, delusive pleasures of this life are but shadows and dreams. Scarcely is the sin committed, when the sense of pleasure is extinguished. Short is the enjoyment, but the punishment has no end."—St. Chrysost., ibid.

"If temptations assail you, if troublesome suggestions distress you, think of the heavenly treasure that awaits you. Who would not suffer something in the defence of his property, in settling the boundaries of his estate, or in securing his fortune? If for these trifles men expose themselves to so many dangers, how can they be indifferent to the concerns of religion? Why does their courage fail them, when an eternal crown is the object?"—St. Augustine, Serm. 543, t. 5, p. 1328, ed. Ben.

Think also on the joy of the victory. "The consciousness of unsullied purity is the greatest of all pleasures; nothing can equal the satisfaction of having conquered lust, nor can a more complete victory be obtained than that over corrupt appetites. The man who conquers an enemy gives a proof of superior strength to another; but he that subdues lust conquers himself."—Auctor vetus, l. de Pudicitia, inter Op. St. Cypriani, p. 422.

St. Jerome (Ep. 18. ad Eustochium, t. 4, ed. Ben. p. 47) says: "Sharp is the conflict, but great is the reward to imitate the martyrs, the apostles, and Christ himself. These things will appear hard to a person that does not love Christ." He adds, that we must always bear in mind how much Christ suffered for us. "The only suitable return is to give blood for blood, and to sacrifice our lives for him, who redeemed us by his passion. What saint was crowned without a struggle? Solomon alone passed his life in pleasures, and this circumstance, perhaps, will account for his fall. Nothing is hard to those who love, nothing insupportable to a willing mind."—Ibid.

Even Ovid could assure us, that the joy of the victory is exceedingly great and permanent, and costs little, if compared with the anxieties, pain, and cruel slavery of the passion.*

* Quod juvat exiguum; plus est quod lædit amantes:
Preponant animo multa ferenda suo.
Quot lepores in Atho, quot apes pascuntur in Hybla,
Cærula quot baccas Palladis arbor habet,
Littore quot conchæ; tot sunt in amore dolores;
Quæ patimur, multo spicula melle madent.

9. A person, who is molested by this enemy, may every evening going to bed, or at other times, meditate on some terrible circumstance of the last things. He may imagine a dead carcase lying in the grave, crying out to him "Be mindful of my lot, for such also shall be thine; yesterday to me, and to-day to thee."—Eccl. xxxviii. 23. Or, he may represent to himself an unhappy soul buried, for some sin of impurity, in the flames of hell; he may in his imagination hold a dialogue with her, answering himself; as how much she suffers in every faculty; how long she has endured these torments, and how long she will endure the same, viz., that she will continue in them till the duration would exhaust all the sands on the shore, and all the drops of the ocean, at the rate of one drop or grain at the end of every million of ages: and after all this suffering see her torments as fresh as ever, and so to be felt to all eternity; he may ask, what her sentiments now are of all the enjoyments of this world, and of that base sin for which she suffers so much. Or let him represent to himself Christ hanging upon a cross, and the bitter torments he suffered for us; and by fervent prayers beg of God to be preserved from the misfortune of losing heaven, of the flames of hell, of offending God, of trampling under foot the adorable blood of Christ. Let him make the petition of this virtue an earnest part of all his sacrifices and prayers, especially every morning and night, imploring the intercession of the blessed Virgin, his angel guardian, St. Joseph, &c., commending his heart into the hands of his crucified Saviour, and renewing his most firm purpose of never sinning more.

10. If any temptation assault him, let him vigorously repulse and resist it, not ordinarily with that external violence, which would often serve only to imprint the image deeper on the mind; but with the utmost quickness and vigour, turning the mind from the object, making a short ejaculation to Christ crucified, begging by his precious wounds and adorable blood to be preserved from the devouring enemy, and fixing the mind calmly on some object, which may divert its attention. If the mind be not occupied in something serious, let it be employed on the sufferings of Christ, or the torments of the damned, or in earnest prayer. He may look on a crucifix, make the sign of the cross with his thumb on his breast, and converse in mind with his good angel, or say to himself, Job, vi.: "Can any one taste thatw hich, being tasted, brings death," even eternal death to the soul?" or, "O Lord! I suffer; have compassion on me." He must be constantly careful not to slacken the earnestness with which he resists the enemy, and to

shun the least levity of motion in his hands or any part, that may in the least favour the temptation; which would be to give the enemy a great advantage over him. An entire vigorous resistance disarms the fury, and weakens him exceedingly. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."—James, iv. If any titillation of involuntary pleasure arise, it is very advantageous, by biting the tongue or lip, pinching the arm sharply, leaping out of bed in the cold, or some such bodily pain, immediately to repress and extinguish it. One heroic victory sometimes so vanquishes this enemy, that he loses his strength for ever against a soul. This St. Thomas of Aquin, St. Francis, St. Wulstan, &c. have experienced. The holy and glorious King Alfred, one of the greatest princes that ever wore a crown in Europe, finding himself, in his youth, grievously molested with temptations of impurity, begged of God to free him from that annoyance and danger, by sending him some painful distemper. God heard his request; and the king was afflicted long with the piles in the most painful manner, and afterwards, during twenty-five years, with the most excruciating pains of the gravel and stone, as is related by Asserius in his Life, p. 42.

11. The last means I shall mention, by which this passion is to be overcome, is the avoiding of all dangers and occasions. The capital point against all sin is to shun the occasions. Wilfully to run into an immediate occasion of a mortal sin, is itself a mortal sin, because it exposes a soul to the danger of losing God. But against impurity this law is most essential, and must be extended farther than against any other vice. In other sins we are commanded to conquer by resisting the devil; but in impurity our safety consists in flight. This the apostle expresses when he says: "Fly fornication."—1 Cor. vi. 18. The reason is, that in this war we have a domestic enemy within ourselves, we find a concupiscence, a law in the members opposite to that of the spirit. "But the flesh is weak."—Mat. xxvi. 41. "The flesh warreth against the spirit."—Rom. vii. "Unhappy man, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The flesh is always struggling against the spirit; it is a traitor within our own doors; if we suffer the enemy to approach and hold any intelligence with it, we shall never be able to defend our fortress. This concupiscence is a covered fire, which is kindled by the least occasion, and throws the heart quite into a flame. No saint was ever able to withstand this enemy but by following this rule and precept of the Holy Ghost; witness the cases of Solomon, David, and Sampson. He who relies upon his own strength is guilty of a more

unpardonable rashness than one, who should pretend naked to hold the mouth of a ravenous tiger, or to carry fire in his bosom, without any fear of being burnt. "Dread the danger of so rash and groundless a presumption. You wish to find an enemy to conquer; but take care lest this prove the occasion of your ruin."—St. Cæsarius, Serm. 195. in app. St. Aug., t. 5.

12. There are three sorts of occasions. First, of the exterior senses, especially of the sight and hearing. "Death enters through our windows."—Jer. ix. 21. The senses are the windows of the soul. To preserve our minds from all bad thoughts, and our hearts from all evil desires, we must shut our ears to all dangerous songs and discourse, and retire from all such conversation and company. Our eyes also we must shut to every object, that might awaken this passion in our breasts. "Turn aside from a dressed woman, and consider not her beauty."—Eccl. ix. David fell by the sight of a woman. Job, though a saint, could say: "I agreed with my eyes, never to think of a virgin."—Job, iii. 1. A great man said very well, that beauty is the strongest and the weakest enemy a man has: by a single glance it conquers, and by refusing a glance it is overcome.

Idleness is the second occasion; especially if joined with solitude.* "Solitude inclines us to evil."—Seneca, Ep. 25. Solitary hours must be filled with very earnest, laborious exercises of mind and body, or by fervent prayer and meditation.

A third occasion is whatever place or other object, which by former habits could renew the remembrance of the passion, especially certain sorts of company.

13. We must fly from the occasions at the first sight. If we deliberate or delay ever so little, we are in the utmost danger of being undone. God himself has given us an excellent figure of this conduct, when he sent angels to draw Lot out of the impure and infamous city of Sodom. They gave him no respite, and pressed him till he had got quite clear; they forbade him to remain in any part of the neighbourhood, and would not suffer him even to look back behind him; and never ceased to repeat: "Make haste to put thyself in a place of safety"—Gen. xix.; and this though his sons-in-law and others mocked him. "He seemed to them to speak as if he were in jest."—Gen. xix. 22.

We have an example how we ought to behave, in the conduct

* Quisquis amas, loca sola nocent, loca sola caveto;
Quo fugis? in populo tutior esse potes.

of the chaste Joseph. He left even his cloak in the hands of the temptress because she had touched it, and attempted to hold him by it; that he might have nothing, which could renew the remembrance of the sinful object. "It was a nice precaution, but, when tempted to lust, it was a necessary one," says St. Gregory Nazianzen. St. Chrysostom often makes use of this example of holy Joseph, admiring the courage with which he feared not the displeasure, indignation, and revenge of his mistress, or any danger of dungeons, torments, or death; nothing could prevail on him to dally one moment with the danger; respect, complaisance, civility, obedience to a mistress, which upon other occasions obliged him to listen and reply with deference, here he forgot, because the least stay or reply would have been dangerous. His purity was assaulted; therefore an immediate and distant flight was indispensable; though it had cost him an eye, a hand, or a foot, or even his life, he owed his sacrifice to God rather than hazard his virtue by tarrying in the danger. In this flight and victory he is more admirable than the three children, who walked without hurt in the midst of the Babylonian furnace, says St. Chrysostom, Hom. 44. in Gen. t. 4, p. 455, ed. Ben. et ib. Hom. 62, pp. 597, 599.

The company, whether of women, or of those whose discourse easily turns upon the subject of amours, &c., is of all dangers the greatest. Ovid says, that a patient who, by obeying his prescriptions, was almost cured, by once falling into this company relapsed irretrievably.

> "A patient who my orders did obey,
> And to his cure was in a hopeful way,
> By keeping lovers' company one night,
> Relapsed beyond my skill to set him right.
> Such dang'rous neighbourhood you must avoid,
> A flock's by one contagious sheep destroy'd."
>
> *Remed. Amoris*, l. 2, v. 667.

> "From all such places, too, you must remove,
> As ever have been conscious to your love;
> The dear remembrance will renew desire,
> And to fresh blaze blow up the sleeping fire.
> There stands the rock on which you split before,
> Imagine there you hear *Charybdis* roar."
>
> *Ib.* v. 822.

> "But ne'er frequent the wanton theatre,
> Where vain desires in all their pomp appear;
> From music, dancing, and an am'rous part,
> Perform'd to th' life, how can you guard your heart?"
>
> *Ib.* v. 33.

DISCOURSE LIX.

ON HUMILITY.

"I am the voice of one crying in the desert."—John, i. 23.

THERE were in the Old Law many holy martyrs and prophets, many great saints, eminent patterns of virtue and perfection, as Abraham, Moses, Elias, and a thousand others; yet the Son of God pronounces that "among the born of women there had not been a greater than John the Baptist."—Matt. xi. 11. His life was one continued miracle. He was foretold by an angel, and received his name from heaven; he was miraculously conceived of parents far advanced in years; he was distinguished by extraordinary graces from the moment of his conception, and sanctified in his mother's womb; not yet born, he knew and adored the world's Redeemer in the womb; at his birth he filled all with spiritual joy, and restored speech to his father. He retired, when young, into the desert, where, in perpetual innocence, he led an angelic life. He preached the baptism of penance, was sent to prepare the world to receive its Redeemer, to baptize him, and point him out to others, whom the prophets had only foretold at a distance; so he was a prophet, and more than a prophet, a doctor, a virgin, and a martyr.

St. Peter Chrysologus (Serm. 127) says: "His life was the school of virtue, the mirror of chastity, the example and way of penance, the rule of true justice, and the most consummate pattern of the highest perfection and sanctity. He was greater than a man, the end of the Old Law, the sanction of the New, the silence of the prophets, the light of the world, the herald of the great judge, and the witness of the world's Redeemer." Now, if we inquire what was the distinguishing virtue of this great saint, what principally raised him to so high a degree of perfection, and to a dignity so exalted, and drew such commendations from the mouth of the Son of God, above all other men, St. Austin (Serm. 288, n. 2) answers, it was his exceeding humility, of which the Gospel gives us a signal example. The Jews, seeing his miraculous life and eminent sanctity, deputed to him a solemn embassy to know if he was not the Messias, whom, according to the prophets, they expected about that time. John, i. St. John confessed in all humility, and denied

not who he was; he confessed he was not the Christ, but tells them the Messias was amidst them, professing himself unworthy to untie the latchet of his shoes. They ask him if he were not Elias? he answers, no: if a prophet? he says, no. The deputies urge for some answer to bring back to those that sent them; he tells them: "I am the voice of one crying in the desert;" I am no more than a voice calling to repentance. Christ calls him the greatest among men (Matt. xi. 11), declares him to be a prophet, and more than a prophet (ib. 9); to be the second, the mystical great Elias, foretold and prefigured by the prophets for so many ages (ib. 14); nay, to be the angel mentioned by Malachy. Yet the Baptist has so mean an opinion of himself that he denies he is anything of all these, and says he is no more than a feeble voice, the instrument of God's word; than an empty sound, and, in himself, a mere nothing.

We, miserable sinners, dear Christians, "fall infinitely short of the virtue and sanctity of St. John; yet our hearts are full of pride."—St. Chrys. Hom. 15. in Joan. This is the source of our tepidity, imperfections, and sins. Had we but a part of St. John's humility, we should, in proportion, have a share in his other virtues; for our progress in perfection depends so much on humility, that without this we cannot make any step towards it; but with it we shall obtain all virtues, with a perfect mastery over our passions, and kill them in their very roots. To convince you of this point I shall endeavour to show, that humility is, of all virtues, the most acceptable to Almighty God, and the groundwork of all spiritual progress. First, let us implore the grace of God by the intercession of his humble handmaid, who, by her great humility, became worthy to be raised above all creatures, and chosen mother of God. Ave Maria, &c.

Humility is of all virtues the most pleasing in the sight of God, as pride is of all sins the most detestable to his divine majesty. All other sins rather run from God; pride alone sets itself up against him, declares to his face war against him, and openly usurps to itself perfections, which belong to God alone. Whereas, God created all things for himself,* he is of all points the most jealous in this, that he will be acknowledged the sole principle and author of all good, and have all creatures remain in due subjection to him, from whose goodness they received all they have. "My honour I will give to no one." But pride in some measure

* Universa propter semetipsum operatus est Dominus.

attempts to dethrone him, turns him out of his title to his own gifts, and usurping them to herself cries out: "I will ascend and be like unto the Most High." Hence, God in every part of Holy Writ thunders out the most dreadful curses against pride. He says the proud are an abomination to him; and declares that he hates and abhors them, and that his soul even loathes their sight. The prophets contain little else than a continued violent invective against this execrable vice. Hence, St. Peter and St. James say: "God resists the proud."—1 Pet. v. 5; James, iv. 6. Alas! what can we say of a base creature, which has a necessary entire dependence on God even to move and breathe, yet dares to resist him! Must not she certainly be crushed by the weight of his omnipotent hand? "See, brother, what a great evil pride is, which has God for its enemy."—St. Jerome. But as God detests pride as his capital enemy, so he loves and cherishes above all things humility. It is to the humble he promises all his favours. He solemnly engages his divine word always to hear their prayers. "The prayer of him that humbles himself penetrates the clouds, and returns not back till the Most High regards it."—Eccl. xxxv. 21. For, such is God's tenderness towards the humble, that he can never refuse their petitions. "Thou wert always pleased with the prayer of the meek and humble."—Judith, ix. 16. "He has attended to the prayer of the humble, nor has he despised their supplication."—Ps. ci. 18. Nay, so ready is he to grant their requests, that he even anticipates the most secret desires of their hearts, before they ask him. "The Lord has hearkened to the dispositions of their heart." Yes, dear Christians, if we have but true humility, God will deny us nothing; we shall have heaven at command, and enjoy all its treasures for asking them. But he not only hears their prayers; "Whose are all the good things, Israel?" Yes, to the humble belong all God's promises and gifts; it is for the humble alone he has prepared his eternal kingdom. "Blessed are the poor in spirit," *i. e.*, the mean and contemptible in their own eyes, says St. Augustine (super Serm. in Monte), "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."—Matt. v. 3. And Christ positively tells us, that unless we become as little children, *i. e.*, full of an entire distrust in ourselves and our own weakness, we shall never enter the kingdom of heaven. It is also to the humble that God dispenses his graces in this life. "He resists the proud, but gives his grace to the humble."—Luke, i. 52, 53. He sends away the proud and full confounded; but exalts the poor and humble, and fills them with his spiritual trea-

sures; it is his delight to shower on them all the abundance of his heavenly riches. The centurion received great praises and blessings from Christ in recompense of his humility. The publican, professing himself unworthy to look towards heaven, returned home highly in God's favour, though before a scandalous sinner; whilst the Pharisee relying on his merits was cast off by God. So true it is what Christ assures us: "Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled, and whosoever shall humble himself shall be exalted."—Luke, xi. 14. For, it is in proportion to our humility that God bestows his graces upon us; the rule of his graces is the measure of our humility, and he usually prepares men for extraordinary blessings by a greater humility, as he did with regard to the Cananean woman, first making her compare herself to the whelps that lick up the crumbs which fall from the table. This was always the rule, according to which God distributed his blessings, as we see in Gideon, David, and all others, whom he raised to great favours in the Old Law; but it is much more so in the light of the Gospel, which is properly the law of humility. Mankind, as it were by inheritance from Adam, were all infected with a cursed spirit of pride. To heal so deep a wound, to cure so inveterate a distemper rooted in the very soul of man, the Son of God humbled himself so far as to become man, to be born in extreme poverty, to live in the utmost contempt and want, and to die on an ignominious cross, and appear as the outcast of mankind. "I am a worm, not a man: the outcast of men and despised by the people."—Isa. liii. 3. He began and completed the victory over hell by humility. He chose for his precursor a saint, whose distinguishing character was humility, and selected the most humble of mortals to enrich her with all his graces, to raise her above the seraphim, and make her his ever immaculate mother. "Because he has looked upon the humility of his handmaid; behold for this all generations shall call me blessed."—Luke, i. 48. Hence, St. Leo (Serm. de Epiphan.): "Humility is the whole of Christian wisdom of our Saviour's victory, which has subdued the devil and the world, a victory which was planned and completed by humility." Christ's whole life was a perfect example of the most consummate humility, and his preaching tended entirely to plant this virtue in our hearts. "Christ taught that the practice and the reward of faith are found in humility."—St. Hil. in Ps. 118. He says to all his followers: "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart." Learn of me not to conquer nations, or to be great according to the world; learn not of me to work

miracles, to draw upon you the eyes of the world, and make yourself admired by signs and wonders, but to be meek and humble of heart, to be mean and contemptible in your own eyes. What a subject of confusion must it be to us to see a God humble himself to such a degree to cure our pride! "He was rich, but for your sake he became poor; that you might become rich by his poverty." He divests himself of his glory, lays aside all marks of his infinite majesty, hides his immensity under the members of a weak, impotent child, wrapped in rags, laid in a manger, and destitute of all succour; he conceals his divinity under the cover of the greatest poverty, and appears in the most contemptible state even among his creatures, to the end that he might teach us humility. "A powerful medicine! if this do not cure our pride, I know not what will. God becomes man; and all the frailty, all the infirmities of humanity do not convince us that we are but men."—St. Aug., Serm. 77, p. 423, t. 5, ed. Ben. Can we pretend, whilst we are filled with a vain conceit of ourselves, ever to be members of so humble a head, ever to be enrolled among the disciples of Christ, and heirs of his kingdom? No, certainly. He strictly enjoins all his followers to imitate his example. Having waited on his disciples at supper, and washed their feet, he tells them: "I have given you an example, that as I have done you do also." Unless we imitate our Divine Master in this heavenly virtue, unless we become like children by humility, we can never hope to be pleasing in his sight, or sharers of his kingdom. But humility is not only the most acceptable virtue in the sight of Almighty God; it is even the groundwork and foundation of all Christian perfection, without which there can be no true virtue.

The Holy Ghost assures us that "pride is the beginning of all sin." Pride is the parent, and only gate of hell. It transformed the prince of angels into the blackest of devils; it drove Adam out of paradise, who, by an inordinate desire of acquiring a knowledge like to God, lost the happy state of innocence and grace, and involved himself and all his posterity in so many miseries. This cursed spirit of pride still infects all mankind, and is the cause, the source of all the sins committed in the world. If truth itself declare that pride is the source of all sin, it is evident, says St. Prosper, that without it no sin ever was, or will be, or can be committed. And it would be easy to show by an induction, that there is no vice which owes not its rise to pride; for this is not only a particular capital sin; but it is also a general vice which attends all other sins, as St. Thomas

observes. Other vices attack directly but one virtue, to which they are directly contrary, but pride destroys at once all virtues. This tyrant of our passions, this mother and queen of vices (St. Greg. Mor., l. 31), has no sooner seized upon a soul, than it delivers her over to all other sins as to its cruel ministers and agents, to be laid waste by them. Nay, it is often an effect of God's mercy to permit the proud soul to fall into some palpable sins, that she may be brought to open her eyes. St. Peter might, perhaps, have never discovered and washed away the fault of his presumption with those penitential tears, had he not fallen into an open denial of his Divine Master. How grievous, then, must be the wound of pride, when the greatest sins are in some sense its remedy, and, perhaps, sometimes the only hope of its cure! "I am not afraid to say, that it is an advantage to the proud to fall into some grievous and notorious sin."*—St. Aug. This is, then, what St. Augustine, with good reason, thinks the Royal Prophet calls the greatest of all sins, and begs so earnestly to be cleansed from. "And I shall be cleansed from the greatest of all sins." But as pride, says St. Chrysostom (Hom. 15. in Matt. p. 185), is the fortress of the devil, the root and the source of all sin, so has Christ given a proper remedy against it, by making humility the groundwork of the Gospel, as it is the foundation of all virtue, without which no structure of piety can be thought of. For this reason, he begins his heavenly doctrine by pronouncing the humble blessed. Humility is the guardian of all virtues; without it all mortifications, chastity, &c., are false and vicious. St. Anthony saw all the world set in snares and dangers, and in a fright asked who could escape? but heard, "humility can defend us."—Ruf. l. 3. vit. S. Ant. Humility is the foundation of virtue, first, because without it there can be no true virtue. All the virtues that were in the heathen philosophers were but false and counterfeit, and accordingly vanished as smoke, because influenced by a cursed pride, says St. Bruno, in Rom. And he that attempts to acquire any "virtue without humility, does but scatter dust before the wind."—St. Greg. in Isai. iii. "If this foundation be wanting or tottering, the whole structure of virtues is but a ruin."—St. Bernard, l. 3. de Cons., c. 14. Secondly, it is the foundation of virtue, because without it we can never begin nor persevere steadfast in virtue. Hence, St. Augustine says:

* Audeo dicere superbis utile esse cadere in aliquod apertum et manifestum peccatum, &c.

"The first disposition to a virtuous life is humility; the second is humility; the third is humility; and as often as you ask me, so often shall I always answer, the same humility." And St. Basil defines it, "the most secure treasure of all virtues."—Ep. 56. ad Dion. Monast. Const. It is by humility alone we can ever hope to make the first step towards acquiring any virtue; it is by humility alone we must preserve what we have acquired. Thirdly, it is the foundation and basis of virtue; because our progress in all virtues is entirely proportioned to our proficiency in humility. It is according to this that God measures his graces, those divine virtues which he infuses into our souls. Had we but true humility, we should be soon filled with all other virtues in perfection. Take away pride, and you will purge the world from all sin. "He is truly immaculate, who is free from this vice."—St. Aug. in Ps. 19. Were we but as humble as the blessed Virgin, we should be as free from all sin, have as great a mastery over our passions, and be as much enriched with all excellent virtues. The perfection of our lives is to be measured by the degree of our humility. "If you desire to be great, begin by being little."—St. Aug. The higher the edifice we design to raise, the deeper must be the foundation; the greater degree of perfection we aim at, the greater must be our humility. As a tree grows and flourishes the more, the deeper its roots shoot into the earth; so, the greater your humility, the higher will be your virtue. "It shoots its fruits downwards, and so produces fruit." 4 Kings, xix. 30. St. Simeon Stylites, when he first consecrated himself to a more perfect life, had a mysterious vision: he seemed to himself to be digging the foundation of a very high edifice, and being exceeding weary and spent with labour and toil, heard a voice repeated thrice to him: "Dig deeper, dig deeper, dig deeper!" by which he understood he could never labour too much to acquire a sufficiently perfect humility, to serve as a solid foundation of the edifice of Christian perfection. Have we not all reason to admire and praise, with perpetual acts of thanksgiving, the infinite goodness of Almighty God, who has made our perfection consist in a thing so easy, so proportioned to every one's capacity? Had he commanded us, as kings on earth do their generals and ministers, to conquer nations and armies, to take cities, or to raise ourselves in the State, and push our fortunes by projects and industry, many might justly complain they had not the learning, the abilities, riches, and other things necessary for such great undertakings. Besides, a happy success in such attempts often

depends more on accident than on our endeavours. But God requires neither wit, nor strength, nor treasures, nor any other qualifications, nor hard conditions; he commands us only to humble ourselves. To raise ourselves might, perhaps, be often out of our power, but to become humble, to debase ourselves at the consideration of our ingratitude, weakness, and misery, can certainly be no such impossible or difficult task. In this we can have no excuse. As then, dear Christians, it is humility alone that can make us acceptable to Almighty God, and we become so much the more pleasing to him, by how much the more we appear mean and contemptible in our own eyes; "the greater value we set upon ourselves, the more contemptible do we appear in the sight of God, and the more we despise ourselves, the more will God esteem us"—St. Greg. Mor. l. 18; let us, to the utmost of our power, employ our endeavours to acquire this virtue, and to banish from our hearts that cursed pride, which is the spring of all our other passions, and which often infects the best of our actions. Let us remain convinced, that this is the most heinous and most pernicious of all the capital sins. "Comparatively speaking, it would be better for a man to be guilty of every other sin than to be a slave to pride."*—St. Greg. Moral. Ib. "It is the most evident mark of eternal reprobation, as humility is the proper character of the elect." Pride is the proper badge of the devil. "He is the sovereign of all the sons of pride."—Job, xii. 25. Without this virtue, which is the very essence of a Christian life, we can never be called disciples of Christ, or hope to be partakers of his graces. "It is in vain that we bear the name of Christians, if we do not imitate Christ. He declares himself to be the way, that his disciples may learn their duty from the tenor of his life, and the servant practise that humility which was chosen by his master."—St. Leo, in Nat. Dom. If we imitate his humility we shall share in his promises, and, in proportion to our progress in this virtue, be exalted in the kingdom of heaven, open only to the humble and poor in spirit. For this reason the Scriptures everywhere call the predestinated the "poor of God" (Ps. lxxi. 2), *i. e.*, those that are poor in their opinion of themselves, and who esteem themselves to have nothing (St. Aug., in Ps. 71); and our blessed Redeemer by this name calls his dear troop: "Fear not, thou little flock, for it has pleased God to give you a kingdom."—

* Qui superbus est, melius ei erat ad comparationem mali, ut omnia alia vitia haberet.

Luke, xii. 32. "He calls his Church thus," says venerable Bede, "for the sake of humility, because, by humility he will have it grow, and through humility obtain a kingdom."

DISCOURSE LX.

ON THE MEANS OF OBTAINING HUMILITY.

"Gladly, therefore, will I glory in mine infirmity, that the power of Christ may dwell in me."—2 Cor. xii. 9.

St. Paul says, that though he was called to the apostleship of the Gentiles, and "in nothing inferior to those who were apostles in the most eminent degree," yet "he was nothing" (2 Cor. xii. 11); though he was favoured with the greatest graces, and the highest revelations, though he had been caught up to the third heaven, yet he valued not himself on anything of this: "For myself," says he, "I will glory in nothing but in my weaknesses;" and again, "willingly will I glory," &c., v. 5, v. 9. Nay, so great was his love of abjection and humility, that in the greatest humiliations he found his greatest pleasure. "I please myself in my weaknesses, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am powerful."—v. 10. He knew that God chooses the weak, and the contemptible, or those that are nothing, to break the wise and great, and confound those who seem to be something; he knew that of himself he was nothing, and that to be strengthened by the grace of Christ, he must be penetrated with a deep sense of his own weakness. It was his profound humility which prepared St. Paul to be that vessel of election, and perfect pattern of all virtues, and which drew so copious a blessing from heaven on his labours; and it is by the perfect practice of this same divine virtue that we must both lay the foundation of all virtue in our souls, and advance daily in the ways of Christian perfection. The primitive Christians were thus perfect, because truly grounded in humility. St. Chrysostom justly admires how, amongst them, all sought to obey, none to command; how ready, how cheerful, all were to obey; how superiors treated all even with honour and respect; because every one, superiors and inferiors, regarded himself as the unworthy servant of all others

in the ministry in which God had placed them. We are so far from their perfection, because so far from their humility. A cursed pride reigns throughout all our discourses, actions, and whole behaviour, infecting all states and conditions; from the king to the beggar every one studies in all he does to aggrandize himself, to show the talents he is endowed with, or, at least, to appear what he really is not. This is the spring of all our actions, of all the motions of our hearts. "This is the wine, with which all the inhabitants of the earth are made drunk (Apoc. xvii. 2); this is the first lesson we learn in schools; nay, the deadly poison we suck in from our most tender years; it is strengthened by example, and by habit becomes a second nature; it is inbred in our flesh, closely riveted in our very bones, and lurks undiscovered in the foldings of our heart, even when we have got a mastery over all our other passions; for pride always remains for us to fight against; the more we perfectly overcome it, the more we humble ourselves, the more does God infuse into our souls the treasures of his virtues. "On whom shall I cast my eyes, but on the poor, the contrite, and him that feareth my words?" That we may labour effectually to root out this master-spring of all our passions, "a hidden, inherent pride," it is my design to point out the principal means we ought to make use of for this end. Ave Maria.

Humility is defined by St. Bernard, "a true knowledge of ourselves, by which we become sincerely contemptible in our own eyes." "Let all your thoughts begin and end in yourself; consider what and who you are."—Lib. de Cons. It resides partly in the understanding, inasmuch as it is a perfect knowledge of ourselves, of our own nakedness and miseries, and partly in the will, inasmuch as it is a moral virtue. The principal means by which this twofold humility is to be acquired are the subject of this discourse, viz., as it implies a knowledge of ourselves, my first part; and as it produces in us a sincere contempt of ourselves, and a distrust in our own abilities and strength, my second part.

Many men know many things; study to measure the heavens and count the stars; spend nights and days to make new discoveries, and unravel the most obscure knots; and dive into the mysteries of faith, and into all passages of Scripture: but suppose they knew all nature, had acquired the sciences of all books and libraries, all this is only toil and vanity, if they have not studied the science of the saints, the knowledge of themselves, of their

own nakedness, poverty, and miseries. Learning without this all-necessary knowledge fills us only with presumption and self-conceit, and a poor idiot will be far more capable of advancing in virtue and promoting the service of God in others, than we with all our studies. "Better founded is the hope of the unwise." This is that true wisdom, which teaches us all virtue, and draws upon us all the treasures of God's graces. "With it I received all good things."—Wisd. vii. 11. Now the means by which this knowledge of ourselves is to be acquired are serious and attentive meditation and fervent prayer. I say attentive meditation; for a slight reflection will never be able to penetrate the darkness which surrounds us, and can only make a faint impression on our souls. James, i. 27. This would only make us like a man, who, beholding himself in a looking-glass, immediately turns away, and forgets what he had seen in himself; but we must let our meditation sink into our souls, and by it remain always penetrated with a deep sense of our own nothingness, weakness, and misery. "I am a man conscious of my poverty."—Jer. iii. 1. Most men see in their imagination not themselves, their own weakness and misery, but certain phantoms of perfection quite different from what they really are. To remedy this evil, to dispel these clouds, we must seriously consider that of ourselves we are a mere nothing; for so many ages we were nothing, and should have remained so for all eternity, had not God drawn us out of that abyss; had he not called us by our names, and given us all we are or have, we should all still be less than the basest insect, less than the least grain of sand or particle of dust that is trodden under our feet. We are then, of ourselves, a mere nothing, both as to soul and body; as to all our faculties and senses; as to our very being. As God is a necessary, self-existent, absolute, independent being, "I AM WHO I AM" (Exod. iii. 14); so we are necessarily so many nothings. Our very name is nothingness; all we can claim a title to in the order of nature, grace, or glory, comes entirely from God; and so essential is this nothingness to us, that God, though omnipotent, cannot make us be anything of ourselves, and independently of him. Did not God, moreover, preserve us every moment as to all we have or are; did not he move our will, senses, and members in all we do, we should instantly drop into our original abyss. Can we then be puffed up as if we were something? "If any one think himself something, why he is really nothing, he deceives himself."—Gal. vi. 3. Yet how little is this thing nothing known or considered by men!

"I was reduced to nothing, and I knew it not." As then I am nothing, I will remain in my centre; will never regard myself as worth anything, as having any merit, any perfection of my own.

Secondly, consider the great miseries to which we are inevitably subject. We were conceived in sin, and came into the world the children of wrath, with many cruel wounds in soul and body. "Thy origin and thy genealogy may be traced to the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorrhæan, and thy mother a Cethæan."—Ezec. xvi. 3. "What hast thou, that thou hast not received?"—1 Cor. iv. 7. "Groundless is thy vanity." We were born in tears, and live in toil and anxiety; subject to heat and cold, hunger and thirst, weariness, and a thousand pains and accidents in every sense, and part of our body; an army of distempers hovers over us, and attacks us sometimes single, sometimes in complication together. We stand condemned under an inevitable sentence of death, uncertain every moment when it will be executed upon us; certain only that this life, replenished with miseries, shall soon end; and that then our body will turn to dust, and become a nest of worms, of filth, and stench. "I said to putrefaction, thou art my father, and to the worms, ye are my mother and my sister."—Job, xvii. 14. Our soul still groans under greater miseries, surrounded with darkness and ignorance, a prey to shameful passions, and a thousand inordinate affections; her will depraved and bent to evil by the weight of concupiscence, but feeble and languishing in all that regards God and her eternal good, unable to form the least good desire without God's special grace.

Thirdly, if you have forfeited your baptismal innocence by mortal sin, or perhaps by repeated and grievous sins, what reason have you not to be filled with confusion, and to humble yourselves below all creatures, and in some sense below the devils themselves? They sinned indeed, but only once; Heb. vi. 4; they had never received the immense benefit of a redemption, and had not the blood of a God to trample under foot; Heb. x. 26; but you, after so many solemn engagements made in the sight of God, his angels, and the whole Church, after so many sacraments, and so many graces received, have crucified again your Redeemer, and polluted the blood of the New Testament. You hope, but cannot certainly know that your sins are pardoned: you know you have sinned, but know not whether your repentance has been sincere and acceptable in the sight of God. And though we

ought to confide in God's mercy, still that our sins are blotted out is due to his goodness alone; and this clemency serves rather to aggravate our ingratitude; as if a king pardon a traitor, the crime against so good a prince appears only the more heinous. It is still no less eternally true, you have sinned, you have been the author of so monstrous an evil in the sight of heaven and earth, though God's mercy shines in having blotted out that stain. A certain solitary followed this practice; he imagined that all, even inanimate, creatures, upbraided him with his ingratitude, and cried out to him, what dost thou do on earth, thou hast deserved hell? But we, who have done no penance for our sins, live securely. "Can you think it a matter of small consequence to have sinned?"—Jos. xxii. 16. But suppose that, by a particular grace, you may have preserved the robe of baptismal innocence unspotted, this is wholly due to God's distinguishing mercies to you. Had he not removed you from the occasions, or preserved you by his singular graces, you would have surpassed, in the heinousness of your crimes, the greatest sinners. "If I have avoided sin, I owe it to thy grace; and what I have avoided I consider as forgiven by thee. Let him then love more, who is free from the bonds of sin."—St. Aug. Conf., l. 2, c. 1. So, your obligation is but the greater to Almighty God. "It is a greater favour to be preserved in innocence, than to have your sins pardoned."*—St. Aug. super. Gen. ad Litt. But reflect in what manner you have answered these obligations. If you have done all that is commanded you, and in the greatest perfection, you must still say, "We are unprofitable servants."—Luke, xvii. 10. Does a master thank a servant for doing what he was obliged to do?

From our creation and conservation, we by a double title owe to God all that we have or are. "All things are thine, and we have returned what we have received from thee."—1 Paral. xxix. 14. And for the benefit of our redemption, what shall we be able to repay? Though we spent every drop of our blood, it would be nothing to the precious blood of a God spilt for us. Again, all our good works are to be ascribed solely to God; it is his grace which produces them in us; and nothing is due to us only a greater obligation to God's mercy. "Without me you can do nothing."—John, xv. 5. "We cannot so much as form a good

* Major gratia impenditur illi, cui conservator innocentia, quam cui remittitur culpa.

thought of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God."—2 Cor. iii. 5. "It is not he that wills, nor he that runs, but God's mercy alone, to which all is due."—Rom. v. 16. "Thou art worthy, O Lord! to receive glory, and honour, and strength, because thou hast created all things."—Apoc. iv. 10.

Reflect, on the other side, in what manner you have corresponded with God's extraordinary graces, how often, from the first moment in which you were capable, you have every day, by negligence and malice, by omission and commission, by all the senses of your body, and all the faculties of your soul, multiplied sins beyond all measure, so that they surpass in number the hairs of your head, and the stars of the firmament; how you have been rebellious to his graces and calls, and gratified yourself in sloth, sensuality, and excess, in almost all your actions; how vanity, human respect, and tepidity, creep in and spoil your best actions. And did you but know yourselves, could you but sound the bottom of your own hearts, you would see it filled with nothing but corruption and sinful affections, tyrannised over by a legion of furious passions. If we must give an account of every idle word, of every moment not husbanded to advantage, must not such an army of sins strike us dumb, considering the severity of our all-seeing Judge? "What is all our justice in the sight of God? Does not the prophet compare it to the vilest rags? (Isa. lxiv. 6.) If we would form a true judgment of our real merit, we should conclude that all our virtues are imperfect and below the standard."—St. Bern. in Job, ix. 15. "If I possess the appearance of virtue I will not answer, but I will have recourse to my Judge." Consider again the uncertainty whether you are in the state of grace. St. Paul, though immediately inspired in all he preached and wrote, yet trembled at this thought: "I am not conscious of anything," &c., so true it is that "no man knows whether he be worthy of love or hatred;" much less whether he shall persevere in grace to the end. Had Judas, at the time when he shone among the apostles, possessed the gift of miracles, and commanded the devils, searched the bottom of his heart, and stifled his rising passion, he would not have betrayed his Divine Master. God only knows (can we think of this without trembling?) whether we have not at this instant some latent passion, some seed in our heart, which may prove our eternal reprobation. How many, admired by the world, have, by some secret pride, been thrown headlong into the precipice! We are of ourselves unable to stand: a child walking down a steep hill of ice is not so near a fall as

we are to sin, if left to ourselves. We are weakness itself; yet surrounded with enemies, and hanging every moment as it were by a thread over the precipice of sin, and consequently over hell itself; it is but a step for us to sink into that dreadful abyss. St. Anthony saw all the earth covered with snares, and heard a voice: "Humility alone shall escape with safety."—Rufin. Vit. St. Ant., lib. 3, c. 129. These, and such like considerations, pondered frequently and at leisure, will penetrate us with the true idea of our own nakedness and misery. But this is only the ground of humility; the devil is convinced of his own miseries, yet as proud in his ignominy, as he was once in glory. The heathen philosophers have given many excellent speculations concerning the knowledge of ourselves, yet were filled with pride. True humility consists in this, that as we see ourselves destitute of all good, and full of nothing but corruption, so we have a sincere contempt of ourselves, and a true affection of humility in the bottom of our heart. The mere knowledge of ourselves is very different from true Christian humility, which is an effect of grace. The former affects not the heart, changes not the affection; but the latter, formed by charity, inflames and penetrates the heart, and influences our actions.

The means by which this contempt of ourselves is to be acquired are prayer and frequent acts of humiliation. The more we converse with God, the more we see his infinite perfections, and the more clearly we read in them our own miseries and imperfections. By this heavenly conversation our soul is overspread with a divine light, by which our least faults appear to us in their true colours; *i. e.*, as monstrous evils. One ray of this heavenly light discovers our miseries more clearly to us than all our reflections can do; as one ray of the sun enlightens objects much better than all the stars together. Thus, the blessed spirits in heaven humble themselves the more, the nearer they approach to God's throne; and by this means the saints on earth see and express so feelingly their own unworthiness, as St. Francis, St. Catherine of Sienna, and St. Teresa. The more Abraham saw of God's infinite majesty, the more did he drown himself in the abyss of his own nothingness. Gen. xviii. 27. Moses had a defect in his speech, a great confusion before the multitude; St. Paul, "The sting of the flesh." St. Chrysostom (in Matt.) observes, that God causes vicissitudes of consolation and affliction in all his servants to preserve humility, as in the case of St. Joseph. Isaiah no sooner saw God on the throne of his glory,

than he perceived his lips were too impure to pronounce his greatness; and Job, contemplating the divine essence, was confounded, and humbled himself more, acknowledging he was nothing but dust and ashes. But those who are buried in sin, or have not the true spirit of prayer, are strangers to this its effect however, if we desire to become humble, we must practise fervent prayer, and frequent ejaculations to Almighty God, filled with an awful respect. We must adore his infinite riches, bounty, and mercy; we must consider our own poverty, weakness, and sinful ingratitude; and above all, must frequently pray that God remove from us all pride. "Let me not tread the path of pride."—Ps. xxxv. 12.

The second means to acquire this virtue is to practise frequent acts of humiliation. All habits are acquired and strengthened by repeated acts; and the more frequent, the more intense these acts are, the more do they increase the habit. "Humiliation is the road to humility, as patience is to peace. If you refuse to humble yourself, you will never attain humility."—St. Bern. Ep. 87. We must practise these acts towards God, ourselves, and our neighbour. Towards God: annihilating ourselves before his infinite majesty, and continually presenting ourselves before his throne as naked, blind, and leprous, unable to do anything: "To God alone be honour and glory" (1 Tim. i. 17); and confounded at the sight of our ingratitude, we must, with the twenty-four elders, lay our crowns at his feet, and sincerely acknowledge we have nothing but from him. We must thank him that he disdains not to look down on such despicable, ungrateful creatures, and beg he would deliver us from the tyranny of our passions. We exercise humility in regard to ourselves, remaining always in the centre of our own nothing; penetrated with a sense of our own poverty, weakness, and misery; having always before our eyes our baseness and past ingratitude, and crying out to God: "Thus, O my God! I live; and is this life?"—St. Aug. Conf., b. 2. We must perpetually detest the corruption and secret pride of our hearts. If we see not this pride it is certain we have not a true knowledge of ourselves; for were we free from pride, we should be free from all other sins. We must regard ourselves unworthy of the air we breathe, and of the water we drink; unworthy of all consolation; of all graces from heaven; unworthy to live on the earth, or to be joined to God's servants; but worthy of all evils, of all diseases and afflictions; worthy of all spiritual dryness, of all trouble and anxiety; of all contempt from God and his

creatures; nay, of eternal torments. We receive with joy whatsoever miseries we meet with, as not equal to what we deserve, and thanking God that he is pleased to treat us in this manner. In consolations we must be confounded to see God caress us instead of punishing us, and be persuaded he does it to condescend to our weakness, we not being able to suffer for him as his true servants do. In our failings we must humbly detest our malice and sloth, but not repine at ourselves. It would be a mark of great pride to be dejected, because we are not such as we proudly imagined we were. In our good works we must always fear our tepidity, and some sinister intention. We must take care to practise no extraordinary actions, except by advice, and that never in public. We must endeavour to conceal our good works; for he that carries a treasure openly, desires to be robbed of it. Yet we must perform devoutly our duties, that we may scandalize no one, but that our light shine before men. But in this, "like travellers, let us not consider how far we have gone, but how much of our journey still remains. We ought to be more ashamed of the good works we have omitted, than rejoice at those we have performed."—St. Greg. l. 22, Mor. c. 6. With regard to our neighbour, we must put the best constructions on his actions: we must extol his virtues, excuse his failings; "considering thyself lest thou also be tempted." Reflect on yourself and you will be persuaded that no one could be more ungrateful to God than you have been. Had God as a just punishment abandoned you to yourself, you would have fallen much worse than others; and if you are preserved, it is only God's grace which has distinguished you; "For who distinguishes thee?"—1 Cor. iv. 7. As for your own heart you see its corruption and sinful affection, while you see only the exterior actions of others; thus you may justly be persuaded you are of all the most vile, the most miserable, and the most ungrateful. "O man! compare not thyself to the great, nor to the little, nor to any one."—St. Bern., Serm. 37. in Cant. "I will submit to the wrath of God, whom I have offended."—Mic. ii. 9. "Have patience in humility."—Eccl. ii. 4. "The proud live in perpetual contention."—Prov. xiii. 10.

How dost thou know but that he, whom thou contemnest, is predestined by God to be one of the greatest among his saints? Hence, we are commanded to sit in the last place, to show that we ought to prefer every one before us. We ought, then, in our hearts, to serve all as our betters, as friends, or at least, creatures

of God. Our Saviour has said: "I came not to be served, but to serve." We ought to consider always, how far we fall short of the saints, receiving with patience and even joy, all affronts and injuries, and thanking God that we are made worthy to be treated as we deserve. We ought to love and seek for contempt, as we see that by our unworthiness we deserve nothing else. The saints earnestly desired to be like Christ, in suffering the greatest contradictions and contumelies, and were never more glad than when they met with them, and prayed for nothing in this life but "to suffer and be contemned." If we hear any commendations or meet with esteem, we must remember this is often nothing but flattery, whilst the same persons despise us in their hearts. If they truly esteem us, it may be attributed to our hypocrisy. St. Ephrem wept if he heard himself commended, considering with how much shame all his disguise and wretchedness would, at the last day, be exposed to those very persons. But, because it is difficult often to hear praises and not to be delighted secretly with them; "If my heart has secretly rejoiced," Job, xxxiv. 26; it is much more secure to meet with nothing but contempt and contradictions. But how far are we from this? We magnify ourselves in words and actions; vindicate all to ourselves in everything that succeeds; but in disappointments excuse ourselves, saying, we foresaw that, or we were of a contrary opinion. Do not our obstinate contentiousness, our unwillingness to submit to others, our boastings, our pretences, and excuses on all occasions demonstrate, that all our failings and sins proceed from the pride of our hearts? "From the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh."

If, then, we use these means, we shall at once cut up the root of all our sins; but we can never entirely eradicate it out of our breasts. This passion always remains for us to fight against. We are obliged every day to labour for a more perfect mastery over it. Let others seek for grandeur in honour and riches; but we are Christians, and know that humility is our only greatness; let us, then, humble ourselves below all creatures; it is not crying, we are sinners, that can make us humble; pride endeavours always to palliate itself under a feigned appearance of humility; but we must be penetrated with a true knowledge and sense of our nothingness, our weakness, and malice; we must, by prayer and a love of contempt, labour to obtain the true spirit of this virtue. It is this sense of our own poverty, that alone can make us disciples of Christ, and give us security, as well as a true

confidence in God's assistance. "Fear not, you little flock, because it has pleased your Father to give you a kingdom."—Luke, xii. 32. "I know how to humble myself, and how to abound."—Phil. iv. 12. "By honour and dishonour, by bad and good repute."—2 Cor. vi. 8.

DISCOURSE LXI.

ON PERFECTION, WHEREIN IT CONSISTS, AND HOW TO BE ACQUIRED.

"For this is the will of God, your sanctification."—1 Thess. iv. 3.

We acknowledge that the great, the only end of our creation, the infinite majesty of Almighty God, our immediate dependence on him, and our immense obligations to his sovereign goodness for our creation, conservation, and redemption, with a thousand other titles, call upon us to serve him with a true and perfect heart, and to make this the chief, the only business of our life. We cannot but be sensible he most strictly enjoins, not only that we serve him, but that we do it in the most perfect manner. He ushers forth his divine commands in the most express terms: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength." He declares we cannot serve two masters; for he will not be served by halves. If we give him not our heart entire, we give him nothing. If, then, we pretend to serve God, we must do it with a perfect heart. "Serve him with a perfect and true heart."—Jos. xxiv. 14. But the very name of perfection affrights us; it seems to breathe only rigour and tears; we regard it as the business only of recluses, and imagine it would be presumption to aim at it. It is true, the perfection of religious and lay persons, and that of each particular state, is very different. Yet, perfection is an essential duty incumbent on all Christians. "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."—Matt. v. To convince you in what this obligation consists, and how easy it is to be complied with, I shall first endeavour to show, that the perfection which God requires of us consists in well performing our ordinary actions; and in my second part, to prescribe in what manner this is best complied with. It is by this easy practice you may every minute treasure up new merits for heaven, become perfect servants of

Christ, and true saints. The subject then certainly deserves you attention. Ave Maria.

Perfection consists not in raptures and lofty contemplation; nor in great austerities, or any extraordinary actions: for thus, it would have been above the reach of many. But God has placed it in what is easy, and in every one's power. The rich and poor, the learned and unlearned, may equally aim at perfection; for it requires only that we perform our daily actions in a spirit of true Christian virtue. "The commandment which I give is neither above thee, nor far removed from thee. My word is with thee, in thy mouth and thy heart, that thou practise it." —Deut. xxx. 11, 14. What I advance is easily proved. It is evident that our virtue ought to be habitual to us; the practice of it must be frequent, must be continual; we must be holy not by fits, but by habit; we must practise virtue at home and abroad, in all times and places. Consequently, our sanctification can never consist in great and extraordinary actions, which, as they are extraordinary, so of course must be rare; occasions of practising them seldom occur. It is, then, our ordinary actions performed in a true spirit of virtue, our sleeping, our eating, our recreations, &c., which must sanctify our lives. And it is a certain, a self-evident principle, that our sanctification consists in most perfectly performing the will of God in all things. "This is the will of God, your sanctification."

It is the ever holy will of God which gives a value to everything we do. Without it our greatest works are nothing; with it our meanest actions become highly meritorious. Now, it is plainly the will of God, that we punctually perform all the smallest duties of the state in which he has placed us, through a sincere desire of complying with his holy will. It is God who subjects us to the several necessities of nature, of eating, sleeping, &c. It is he who imposes upon us all the obligations of our present circumstances. Must not, then, this practice be the means to sanctify our souls, to do all things in a true spirit of virtue, earnestly desiring only to obey the will of God? We have only to perform the same actions we daily do, in a due manner, to make us saints. But, as there is no state of life which has not its difficulties and dangers, so, every one thinks he meets with the greatest: every one imagines he could be a saint in almost every other profession than the one he is of. You have, dear Christians, in your present happy circumstances, many great helps to perfection, which many are deprived of, who earnestly wish they had but

half the opportunities of virtue you have, and who would, by them, become perfect saints; yet is there none amongst you, who flatters himself he could serve God better in another state, and were he not under his present restraints? This is a most pernicious temptation. Let every one endeavour to sanctify himself in his present state. It is God who places all men in the circumstances they are in, and gives to each person graces suitable to his calling. Who, then, dare repine at his condition, dare thus murmur and rebel against Providence? All different states are necessary for the order, for the government and subordination of the world. A king would be nothing without subjects, nor the rich without the poor. God created all states good. "God saw all things which he had made, and they were very good." Let, then, every one praise and thank the divine goodness for his condition; and let him regard it as the most conducive to God's honour and his own good, and, consequently, for him the best of all others. Only let him study to sanctify his soul in his proper station, thinking himself too much honoured by God, if he be made the last, the meanest member in his Church. "I choose to be the least in the house of the Lord." Let this be his only business, his constant employment, to perform all the duties of his respective calling, with an intention to comply, in the most perfect manner, with the will of God, "and to walk worthy the vocation in which he is called." By this practice, alone, we shall be perfect. There are many great saints before God, who never did anything extraordinary for God; their sanctity is secure and hidden from the eyes of the world, because it consists in what is common, in what others do equally with them, though not in the same spirit. They are saints not by works which appear great to men, but by the interior virtue of their heart, which influences and gives a great value to everything they do. Their constant fidelity to God, in the most trivial actions, gains his affections, so that he tenders them as his most chaste spouses, and showers upon them all the treasures of his graces. "My sister, my spouse, thou hast wounded my heart with one of thy eyes, with one hair on thy neck."—Cant. iv. 9. Our blessed Saviour led a hidden life for thirty years, during which he did nothing great, nothing wonderful in the eyes of men; yet he had come to be the model of our lives. But all the infinite perfection of his divine virtues then consisted in this, that whether he ate, slept, or prayed, whether he worked with his supposed father, or assisted his holy mother in her employments, he did all having only this most

perfect view to fulfil in all things, though ever so small, the will of his heavenly Father. "I always do the things that are pleasing to him."—John, viii. 29. What a subject of consolation is this to us, that we have the means of our sanctification so easy, and so near us, in our breasts, in our hearts! We need but do what we do every day, in a true spirit, to be saints. Let us, then, consider in what manner we must perform our ordinary actions, that we may reap so great an advantage; this is what I am about to explain in my second part.

"Those who shall strictly observe justice shall be justified."—Wis. vi. 11. It is not doing good works, but doing them well that makes them agreeable in the sight of Almighty God. Sloth, negligence, and human respect make the very same actions sinful in a tepid Christian, which, by fervour and a true spirit, are made to shine as the brightest jewels in the crowns of saints. The difference, then, between the lukewarm and perfect Christian is not so much in their works, as in the manner in which they perform their works. But, what are the means by which we must make all our actions so perfect, and our lives so pleasing to Almighty God? I reduce them all to these four. First, we must perform all our exercises and duties with regularity. Secondly, with an extreme exactness. Thirdly, with fervour and perseverance. Fourthly, in a true spirit of religion.

As to the first, it is most certain that to lead a regular life is of the greatest assistance to virtue. This effectually puts a stop to all levity and inconstancy, and is the best method that can be advised, especially for novices in a spiritual life. Our fervour does not always remain equally great; and when it relents, all our exercises will be soon neglected, unless this neglect be stopped by a strict rule, from which we never permit ourselves to be dispensed. Regularity not only prevents the bad consequences which ensue from the fickleness and inconstancy of our temper, but is also, of itself, very meritorious and acceptable to God. He is a God of order; he observes and follows the most exact rule and order in all he does; perfect regularity and a wonderful harmony make up the beauty and perfection of the whole creation. No wonder that he cannot be served by a life of confusion. All disorder must come only from the devil. It is impossible for any one to serve God, even in the world, who does not reduce his life to some tolerable rule. One of the greatest advantages of a religious life is its perfect regularity. The saints all lived regular lives; kings and princes, as holy David, St. Lewis, &c., had their

hours fixed. You have, dear Christians, a very great advantage as to this part in your present circumstances, in which you are happily tied to a perfect regularity in almost every action. By virtue of this, you know certainly the will of God in all you do. You know, at the appointed time, that it is God who calls you to your studies, to your meals, to your recreations, and to all your most trivial actions. You may, also, perform all these actions out of a perfect obedience to the will of your superiors and of God. This great virtue, if cultivated on such occasions, will quite extirpate self-love, will banish and conquer your own stubborn will, which is the root and nurse of all your passions. "The obedient man shall speak victories." But time permits me not to say anything more in favour of obedience, which is necessarily attended with humility, and which, if diligently practised, will alone securely conduct you to the highest degree of perfection. At present, I shall only say, that you have an easy advantage of performing all your actions in the spirit of regularity and obedience, which will add double merit to every action of your life, to every breath you draw. What a help is it, by this means, doubly to know so surely the will of God in all things, great and small; and even without any doubting or perplexity! In other states many things are uncertain, which the law of God does not determine, and which cause many doubts and much disquietude to several good persons. But, where all is settled both as to exercises and time, liberty can scarcely abuse anything: regularity and obedience doubly sanctify all, by reserving all to themselves. Inconsistency and levity are banished. You have but to follow the way traced out before you, to walk securely in the road to perfection, and are dispensed even from the care and trouble of deliberating and examining. "He that walks with simplicity, walks with confidence."—Prov. x. 9.

We must perform our actions, not only with regularity, but also with exactness. We must be exact in performing every action in its due time, place, and manner of doing it. Though every small transgression of regularity, when not attended with contempt, nor proceeding from sloth and indolence, is not a venial sin; yet, to be wilfully deficient in any of these minute circumstances is always an imperfection, and a detriment to our progress in perfection. "Thou shalt be perfect and spotless with the Lord thy God." If the Israelites in the desert neglected to gather the manna before sun-rise, they were deprived of their portion, to show us that we must be exact to a tittle in every

duty, if we hope to receive the increase of grace, which God offers us in that action. If we correspond thus faithfully with God in the smallest things, he will reciprocally be faithful to us, and repay our fidelity by a plentiful abundance of graces. "With the elect thou wilt be elect, and with the perverse thou wilt be perverse."

A third condition necessary for performing our ordinary actions well is fervour. Nothing can be more opposite to the grace of God than sloth and indolence. The Holy Ghost is a fire, which is always active; it is impossible for a soul, which he inflames, not to be carried on with a holy importunity through all difficulties; this ardour is absolutely necessary, especially in the beginning, to surmount the repugnance arising from our pride and sloth, which are unwilling to bend in every smallest point. They will complain that so great, so continual a restraint is intolerable and impossible. To bear up against these difficulties, you must excite in your souls a very great ardour, and a vehement desire of perfection. "The beginning of wisdom is the mastery of our passions." There is nothing, which a vehement desire and strong resolution will not compass; no difficulties that it will not break through with courage and joy. "If then you begin, begin in earnest."—St. Bern. But undertake not at first too great a burden. Lay a heavy load on a child, he cannot stand under it; but when grown up, he bears it with ease. "I have," says St. Paul, "given you milk, not solid food, for hitherto you were not able," &c. Let not, then, your first exercises be too burdensome, but perform them with fervour. A trivial action done with fervour is much more acceptable than the greatest works performed with negligence and tepidity. But, it will be of little advantage to us to begin with fervour, unless we persevere—unless we be constant. Many are fervent in certain fits of devotion; but this soon passes. If our fervour diminish, we grow slack of all duties, and find them too tedious and burdensome. Continually to stir up our sluggish nature, we must have constantly before our eyes how great a master we serve; in whose presence we are; whose holy will all things obey, and the angels and seraphims watch continually to comply with. This reflection will push us on to do every minute action in a manner worthy of such sovereign majesty. A holy superior asked a religious man, for whom he did such an action? For God, said he. And are you not ashamed, replied the superior, to do it more negligently than if you did it for me? Consider again your obligations to God for your creation, conservation, and redemption, and endeavour in

every action to make a grateful return. God loved you from all eternity; he loved you so much as to spill his blood for you, lost in sin; and by consequence, he loved you more than you can love yourselves, more than all creatures together could love you, though they should sacrifice to you all the motions of their hearts. Is it possible, that so great a love of God for you should not excite in you a vehement desire to make him what small return you are able? If you know yourselves, and see the imperfection of your hearts, you see how far you are from perfection. "Thine eyes have seen my imperfection." Say every day, I will now begin. "Not that I had received, or that I was perfect."—Phil. iii. 12. "I have said now I begin."—Ps. lxxvi. "When a man has performed his duty, he may then be said to have begun."—Eccl. xvii. 6. Consider how much remains to your journey's end. "Thou hast still a long way to go." Cast not your eyes on past good works, "forgetting what is past." Reflect how sloth, sensuality, and human respect have stolen away the merit of all your past actions; now redouble your pace, and "speed on the more, as the day is near."—Heb. x. 25. Do every action as if it were the last of your lives. Never say, that any action is small and not to be regarded. This frivolous pretence of sloth is the cause of all tepidity, and at length of sin. Is not God able to reward this action as well as the rest? "Is the arm of the Lord shortened?" You are here placed to traffic. "Traffic till I come." Every action may merit a new reward. God puts all to account. By the least thing done for God you not only merit a crown in heaven, but, also, an increase of grace and perfection in this life. On the contrary, by every imperfection your fervour is impaired, and your virtue diminished. Look into several religious houses, which were once patterns of sanctity and perfection, lights of the world, and the greatest ornaments of the Church; but which, by a small relaxation in the points of silence and recollection, an inconsiderable deviation from the strict discipline of the rule, opened the way to dissipation and irregularity. The lofty magnificent statue of Nabuchodonosor was thrown by a little stone cut off from a rock, which fell on its feet. Take care, then, that the least imperfection never wilfully creep into any action. Under difficulties encourage yourselves, inasmuch as you have now, perhaps, almost conquered the habit of sloth, and it would be a pity you should relapse again into your former tepidity, and thus by one negligence lose in a great measure the fruit of your labour.

The fourth and principal means to make our actions acceptable

to God, is to perform all we do in a spirit of religion and virtue. It is this that gives all the merit and value to whatever we do. The greatest actions, for want of this, are of no profit; and nothing is so inconsiderable which, if it proceed from this principle, is not highly meritorious. This is that true philosopher's stone, which turns all things into gold. Let us, then, make the best advantage of our happy circumstances. We have but to do what otherwise we are obliged to do, with exactness, fervour, and a true spirit, to become saints. A little labour will make the practice easy. After the first difficulties are surmounted, we shall find this exactness a great pleasure, besides the spiritual grace and consolation, the hundred fold promised by Christ, which are an anticipation of the joys of heaven. Let it, then, be our study to learn what is the best way of performing our studies and all our duties in the spirit of virtue. What would you not give to become saints? Had you now spent one year, or we will suppose four or five years, in this manner, you would even now enjoy the fruit. An apprentice to learn his trade—a scholar to acquire learning, grudges not to spend years, &c. Let us make use of the comforts allowed by God to our bodies, through pure charity, not sensuality. "That you may be perfect and complete, failing in nothing."—James, i. 4. Let us submit to all the necessities of nature, to conform ourselves to the will of God, who subjects us to them. "And he that eats, eats unto the Lord; for he returns thanks to God. And he that eateth not, eateth not unto the Lord, and thanks God. For no one of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself."—Rom. xiv. 6, 7. "Wherefore, whether you eat or drink, or perform any other action, do everything for the glory of God."—1 Cor. x. 34; Col. iii. 17.

DISCOURSE LXII.

ON OUR ANGEL GUARDIAN, ETC.

God "has given command to his angels to be thy guardians in all thy ways." Yes, my soul, his supreme majesty has commanded his angels, those most high, most noble, most happy spirits, so near and so familiar to himself, his own chief domestics. And about what has he given them such positive commands? About thee. Who art thou? As if a man were not

nothingness, and the son of man dust and ashes; as if he were not a sinner and enemy of God. What commands, therefore, has he given about thee to his angels? Are they to execute his justice? to show his power on a leaf that is carried away by the wind, or to pursue a weak straw? Are they to take the wicked creature from before his presence? No; but that they guard thee in all thy ways. Oh! how solicitous is thy God for thee! how much does he love thee!

Thou hast with thee, my soul, thou hast always present to protect and assist thee a sublime spirit; he is to inspire and direct, to defend and protect, to fight for thee. He is to carry thee, lest thou ever hit thy foot against a stone. He will remove from thee occasions, and strengthen thee against dangers; with him "thou wilt walk securely over the asp and basilisk, and trample upon the lion and dragon." Take courage, then, thou who art weak; though surrounded with dangers and enemies, what canst thou fear under such protectors and guardians? They are faithful, they are wise and skilful, they are powerful and strong; nothing can overcome them, nor can they be deceived, and much less can deceive or mislead thee. Follow them, and thou wilt always dwell in the protection of the Most High; be devout and grateful to them; have a confidence in them. If the devil go about like a roaring lion seeking to devour me, my guardian angel is still more watchful to protect me.

These blessed spirits are exceedingly solicitous in my protection: first, because this is the positive and express command of God, to accomplish whose will perfectly is their own study. Secondly, because they love me. They expect that the ruins of this heavenly city will be, in part, filled up by me; they love all whom God loves. Hence, they watch over me with great care, every hour and moment ready to assist me, supplying my necessities, running between God and me, to carry my prayers and procure for me his grace and mercy. They help me in labour, they protect me in sleep, they encourage me in battle, strengthen me in temptation, rejoice in my good, and compassionate my wants and miseries. There is joy in heaven before the angels of God upon the conversion of one sinner. How much, then, do my guardians rejoice in my good! Shall I ever deprive them of this joy, and give the subject of triumph to the devils?

Make here meditations on the other infinite benefits of Almighty God, and the excess of love and goodness he shows towards you in each of them.

Meditate on the great benefit of vocation. How miserable is the state—how deplorable the ignorance and blindness of infidels and savage nations. What delivered me from it? The pure goodness of God towards me, above so many millions. How many millions are lost in heresy, ignorant of the true Church, deprived of the chief means of salvation? I am distinguished from them. How happy are my circumstances by my vocation! I learn heavenly mysteries, all means of salvation, &c. How important a knowledge, beyond all that of arts and sciences!

Again, meditate on the sacraments, *e. g.*, baptism. What did I come into the world? Infected with sin, an enemy of God, and under sentence of damnation, it was not in my power to help myself; God loved me then, though his enemy. He, by his wonderful and most easy sacrament, washed off that deep stain, reversed the sentence, &c. He moreover made me his child, and heir of his kingdom, fellow-member and co-heir with Christ. He clothed me with the beautiful robe of sanctifying grace, &c.

For another meditation choose his love in instituting the sacrament of penance. What ingratitude, what perfidy in me to offend him again, after baptism and all my vows of allegiance! How justly did I deserve no second remedy! The devils met not with any means of mercy even for the first sin. How little, how easy a task does he require of thee, for this second reconciliation! Only to repent, and love him for the future. Could he demand less? Without this remedy what wouldst thou have done? Had not hell been thy certain portion? God still affords thee this means, O my soul! to secure past neglects. To how many has he refused the opportunity!

Choose also the blessed Eucharist. Consider how in it God exhausted his infinite wisdom, for he could plan nothing greater; also his infinite power, for he could give nothing more; and his infinite love, which knows no bounds.

In like manner, meditate on the other sacraments and divine benefits in particular. How many inspirations, calls, and graces I have ever received, and what opportunities of serving God and acquiring virtue. How many dangers and occasions he has preserved me from; how often he has strengthened and preserved me; how many occasions he has removed from me: though all this while I ungratefully abused his goodness. I sinned and he dissembled it; I abstained not from offending him, yet he withheld his chastisements; I prolonged my iniquity, and he his mercy.

On his eternal love. Yes, O Lord! you loved me first; consequently not for any merits, or anything in me, but purely out of your goodness for me. You loved me before all time. I had no being at all; yet I was present to you; I was in your affection, in your thought. I was nothing in myself, yet I was something in you; because you loved me, before your omnipotent hand had drawn me out of nothing; you loved me from all eternity. It was of me in particular you said: "In eternal charity have I drawn thee." Great, immense as you are, my God, you are pleased to incline your affections down as low as me, not regarding my baseness. You would even take a heart of flesh like mine, to enter sensibly into all my miseries. You make it your delight to converse with the children of men. Not content with living on earth, with suffering contumelies, outrages, all distress, torments, and death for me, you have found the secret always to remain with me, in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist, and to dwell in my heart as in your sanctuary.

On the love he everywhere expresses for me. He styles himself my father, that by the most tender and endearing of qualities he may show how much he loves me. What confidence do I place in a parent! but how much greater ought I to put in God, the best of fathers, the most tender and most powerful! Can a parent forget his child? He loves me far more than a parent can an only son, as he declares by his prophet; he has writ me in his very hands. Is it not then most just I should place a firm confidence in him? Worldly fathers, though wicked, love and give good things to their children. What then will not God do? Courage, my soul! God, whose power and strength are infinite and invincible, whose goodness and mercy have no bounds, is, I say, not only thy patron and protector, but thy most loving and tender Father.

On God's mercies. I have sinned and deserved hell; but my God loves me still, and is desirous to pardon all my past guilt. Fire is not so ready to burn, as he is to forgive all sinners, who return to him. Goodness and mercy are his favourite attributes, in which he surpasses all his other works. He threatens me with hell, not to damn me, but to prevent my falling into it. He has not struck me dead in my sins, but expects me, that upon my repentance he may have mercy on me; for he wills not the death of a sinner; he wills not that any perish, but that all return to penance. He has no interest in my damnation. He created me to be saved. He loves me as his creature, bearing his own image

and redeemed by his blood. Can I then despair of pardon? He has assured me by his infallible word he will forgive all my sins, be they ever so grievous or so numerous, the very moment I sincerely return to him, because he is rich in mercy. He asks nothing of me but repentance; for he himself has paid the debt. I fly then to thee, my God, full of sorrow for my sins, because I have offended thee, O Father of mercies! If my penance has been hitherto imperfect, make it now at least sincere. I know thou lovest me, and desirest my salvation, and for this, thou invitest me so tenderly, thou pressest so earnestly, thou usest all means to draw me to repentance. I then confide in thy promise and mercy. God can pardon all my sins. He can do all things, and manifest his omnipotent power in his mercy, more than in all his other works. Rise then, my soul; why dost thou fear? if the devil would draw thee into despair, answer him: It is true I am the worst of sinners, but God can cancel all; and that he will, I have his divine word for security, and I know his mercy and his love of me are infinite; and that Christ has paid to the full my ransom. His holy passion pleads in my favour. He came and paid my debt for me, nay as much more as the ocean exceeds a single drop of water.

Make distinct meditations on each of the parables of the lost sheep, the prodigal son, &c., or read on them Languet's "Confidence in God."

On courage in temptation. I am surrounded with terrible enemies, but why dost thou fear, my soul? or why art thou troubled? The devil goes about like a roaring lion seeking to devour me; nor is there any power on earth to be compared with his; but he is like a dog in a chain; he cannot hurt me, unless I voluntarily throw myself within his reach. I have my good angel to watch over me by day and by night. I have Almighty God himself covering me with the shield of his protection. The world, like an impetuous torrent, bears everything down before it; but Christ is my captain. He has overcome it. Have good courage, says he, I have triumphed over it. He lived thirty-three years on earth in humility and sufferings, to inspire me with a spirit contrary to that of the world; and by his grace he is ever ready to strengthen me against it. Suffer not, sweet Jesus! that enemy to overcome me, whom thou hast long ago wonderfully subdued. My flesh is a domestic enemy; I always carry it about with me, and am obliged to nourish and cherish it against myself; but thou, O God! hast decreed that its concupiscence shall be under my command. Thou art faithful, and wilt never suffer me to be

tempted above my strength. I am weakness itself. Therefore, in perfect distrust in myself, I fly to thee, O my God! my Saviour! and Protector! Save me, O Lord! whom thy hands have created, and whom thou didst redeem with thy precious blood.

DISCOURSE LXIII.

ON THE NECESSITY AND ADVANTAGES OF TRIBULATION.

1. All the children of Adam must necessarily drink largely of the cup of tribulation, though some have a greater and others a less share of it. Had our first parents never sinned, the case would have stood otherwise, and men might have enjoyed comforts without crosses, and purchased heaven at a cheaper rate. But, in punishment of that transgression, the sentence of labour and pain is passed on all men without exception: "I will multiply thy sorrows."—Gen. iii. 1. Though sin be blotted out by baptism, and all its punishment remitted, yet man still lies under this necessity of suffering. It is no longer a punishment to such souls now restored to God's favour, without the reserve of any further debt to his justice; but it remains for their trial, and as the means of their sanctification, salvation, and crown. What was first ordained for a punishment, by God's mercy changes its nature, and becomes a grace, an occasion of triumph and glory; but it still remains; man's destiny in this life is not changed; he is still a child of calamity and suffering, and "is filled with many miseries."—Job, xiv. 1. Thus, all men must suffer in this life from fears, anguish of mind, bodily necessities, pains, sicknesses, and death; from crosses and disappointments, from the treachery of friends, from the malice of enemies, from the inconstancy of fortune, and from innumerable unforeseen accidents lying in ambush, suddenly to rush upon them from all sides. No place can afford a refuge, no station a protection from these evils. They, whom fortune seems to have raised above the level of other men, are but set up usually as marks for her to shoot her keenest darts against, or often to prepare a deeper pit for. Even they, who might sit content in the world, arm their passions against their own ease, or become a sort of frenetics, and afflict themselves by their own imagination, for the merest trifles, or by empty, groundless fears, troubles, and fury. If any enjoy some interval

of tranquillity, they are sure to meet with a check, and share, in their turn, in the common portion of mankind. Thus, the sinner, the penitent, the innocent or just, all must suffer. Children announce this when born, by beginning to weep, as soon as to breathe. "The babe is born, and he immediately cries. He is the prophet of his misery. He cannot yet speak, but he prophesies," says St. Augustin, Serm. 26. De Verb. Ap. Did men consider this, it would be a great antidote against repining under afflictions. Let them reflect that their impatience and grief are unprofitable, and like arrows shot at no mark up into the sky, only to fall on their own heads and destroy them. In some sensible losses, something may be allowed to tender, weak nature; but any murmuring, or excess in grief, is passion, folly, and madness. Again, let them consider the misfortunes of many others, even saints, kings, and persons most deserving of felicity, yet far greater than theirs, whether in their estates, friends, families, or persons. The remembrance of miseries greater than theirs will make them look upon their own case still as a blessing. Let them but impartially compare their lot with that of Job, or of many within the circle of their own knowledge, *e. g.*, who lost their lives, fortunes, reputation, &c., with circumstances still more grievous, and they will learn to bear their tribulation with moderation, and not exaggerate it to themselves as grief usually does. When the Persian Emperor Darius Nothus was inconsolable at the loss of his favourite concubine, the philosopher Democritus exhausted his reason in vain to comfort him, till he promised to raise her to life again, in case the prince could name three men, who had ever lived without meeting with greater calamities; the Emperor, not being able to find one, dried up his tears. Let men, also, remember the blessings still left them, as other goods, friends, liberty, life, &c. If God have taken something away, to show his sovereign dominion, and make them remember from whom they hold all the rest, they will see they have reason to thank him, and to rejoice that he gave them that so long, and still leaves them so many other comforts. If they answer, that what is lost seemed to them all, this evidently shows it was the idol of their inordinate passions, whether it was honour, a friend, &c., and that God deprived them of it in mercy, as an object abused by them to his dishonour, and the great prejudice of their souls.

Crosses would be much lighter, if men expected them, and were prepared beforehand to receive them. Darts do not wound deep, which are foreseen. But we enhance, nay create our afflic-

tions by our own faults and passions. Men look upon the expectation of sufferings as no comfortable prediction; thus, they industriously banish that prospect from their minds; and, in spite of reason, experience, and religion, promise to themselves a kind of terrestrial paradise in this life, roses, and felicity; whereas, they ought continually to expect thorns, troubles, and disappointments, and be always laying in and increasing a stock of patience, which they will certainly have great need of in almost every step of their journey through this mortal life. By this preparation and expectation of crosses, they will be prepared to meet them, and bear them with courage and cheerfulness, when they happen, and curbed by those thoughts, will be in no danger of being fascinated or puffed up by prosperity, in the midst of which, the lively remembrance of adversity waiting for its turn will be a restraint against all the sallies of the heart. Above all other means, men must consider afflictions in the light of faith, and in God, by whom they are sent in mercy, and always for our good, for the expiation of sin, the purifying of our souls, as great means of virtue and our sanctification, and opportunities of the greatest crowns and victories. Thus, they will appear even amiable and sweet. What the infidel and impenitent sinners suffer without fruit, may increase much by impatience; patience in the just makes sufferings light, nay, delightful, and finds in them the greatest source of spiritual joy and advantages.

2. Temporal calamities, especially such as are general, are most frequently the punishment of sin. They may proceed from the malice of men, or from natural causes; but men are only God's instruments in them, and nature is his handmaid only to execute his orders. "Fire, hail, snow, frost, the spirit of tempests which do his word."—Ps. cxlviii. Not only the world, perishing by the deluge, Sodom and Gomorrha consumed by fire, and the Canaanites cut off by the sword, but all the defeats, afflictions, and misfortunes of the Jews, their cruel slavery under Salmanasar, Nabuchodonoser, and others; their persecution under Antiochus, and their last total subversion under the Romans; the sieges and destruction of Babylon, Nineveh, Tyre, Sidon, and other cities and empires, were clearly the work of God punishing the sins of nations, as we see in the prophets; so are still the famines, plagues, earthquakes, and other scourges that arise immediately from natural causes, and the falls of empires, which we ascribe to accidents, or to the passions of ambitious men. We are not, indeed, to conclude, that nations

so afflicted are always more wicked than others which are spared, any more than those Galileans, whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices; or those eighteen persons, upon whom the tower fell in Siloe. Luke, xiii. 4. God, by punishing some, gives warning to others; and his judgments are most grievous on those, whose punishment he reserves for the world to come. Here he often chastises in his mercy his most faithful servants, to crown them more gloriously. But, as his temporal scourges are chastisements of sin, we ought to receive them with submission in a spirit of compunction, and, by penance and humiliation under them, to remove the cause from our hearts, and appease the divine justice. This is what he himself is pleased to teach us in the Holy Scriptures, and what the Church, directed by his Spirit, has always practised herself, and preached to her children.

Were God to treat us with rigour, we all deserve his severest scourges. The greatest temporal calamities are a much less evil than the least offence of God. All miseries that can befal creatures are light, if compared to it. The overturning of thrones and empires is a less disorder in the universe, and to punish it God sometimes strikes the mighty, who are all but as dust in his sight, and destroys sovereigns and nations with the breath of his mouth, fills families with confusion, abandons kingdoms to wars, famines, or pestilences, smiting even the just with death, as we see in the case of Oza, and other terrible examples in Scripture, "doubtless, to show that no sin is small."* Did the prophets speak now as amongst the ancient Jews; did we penetrate now the secret mysteries of Divine Providence, how easily should we discover the causes of our scourges to be our sins! How should we see the ruin of houses, and states, public humiliations, and other dreadful calamities owing to secret vanities, such as those of David and Ezechias, and other sins! And how should we applaud herein the justice and sanctity of God!

3. Even for the sins of our life past, already remitted by repentance, a heavy satisfaction is often due, as we see in the case of David. His sin was pardoned him, yet God denounces to him: "The sword shall not depart from thy house."—2 Kings, xii. 10. Nor could he by prayers or tears avert those grievous scourges. The like may hang over us for the sins of our youth! Ah! men sin, easily imagining that all will be over by a repentance; they swallow the sweet poison without concern,

* "Absque dubio nihil leve æstimetur quo Deus læditur."—Salvian, l. 6. de Gubern. Dei.

little thinking how dearly it will, probably, one day cost them, even if they find mercy; for the days of sorrow will come, in which they will feel its bitterness. God's pardon is, indeed, entire, but he pardons as a father who wills not that his children abuse his indulgence by returning easily to sin. "The punishment endures after the sin, lest the offence should seem small, if its punishment were all over with it," as St. Augustine says, Tr. 124. in Joan. If we are afflicted in our bodies or mind, if in our children, families, or friends, if in our estates and fortunes, if in the labour of our hands, and ask the reason, it is our sins. "If thou shalt say in thy heart, why have these things befallen me? For the multitude of thy iniquity."—Jer. xiii. 22. "We suffer these things for our sins."—2 Mach. vii. 32. "Thou art just, O Lord! and thy judgments righteous."—Ps. cxviii. 137. The brothers of Joseph, thirteen years after their sins, were thrown into chains. Then remembering their crime, they cry out: "We justly suffer these things, because we have sinned against our brother."—Gen. xlii. 21. We, in like manner, ought to cry out under our affliction: "We justly suffer these things, because we have sinned." The end for which God visits us with his scourges is, that we may repent of all our sins, and satisfy his injured majesty. What, then, ought to be our behaviour under them? Doubtless, to enter into the most perfect penance, and by humiliations and prayer to labour to appease the divine justice. We are not to regard the scourge, but mount up to its cause, consider its source, and employ our tears to remove it; then we may hope to be mercifully freed from its just fruits. God cries out to us: "Banish evil from amongst you. Did not that happen to thee, because thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God? Thy wickedness shall arraign thee."—Jer. ii. 17, 19.

We cry out under the lash: but if the rod cease to strike us, like the Jews, we return to our criminal courses. We weep, then, for our stripes, not for our sins. We neglect the only condition which can move God to withdraw his avenging hand, that of sincere repentance, to move us to which he has struck us in mercy: it is thus he threatened the Jews that he would forsake them till they fainted away, and should seek him. Osee, v. 15. "They sought him absent from them and angry, whom they had not regarded propitious and present to them."—St. Jerome, in c. 6. Osee.

4. God afflicts men sometimes for hidden sins, sometimes for the sins of others, in the same manner as he often shows some

temporal mercy to children for their father's virtues, as he did to Solomon for David's sake. 3 Kings, xi. 12. Hence, the Jews were taught to pray: "Remember the mercies of thy servant David."—2 Par. vi. 42. And Moses: "Remember thy servants Abraham, Isaac, and Israel."—Exod. xxxii. 13. Thus, he sometimes extends not, indeed, the eternal, but the temporal chastisements of parents to their children: "I will visit the sins of the father upon the children to the third and fourth generation."—Num. xiv. 18. David's vanity cost the lives of 70,000 of his people. 2 Par. xxi. 14. Josue's army was defeated, on account of the sin of Achan. Jos. vii. 5. Hence, the Church prays: "Remember not our sins, nor those of our parents." But these punishments, for the sins of others, unless we were imitators, or partners in them, cannot be properly called punishments, as they regard the innocent, being only designed for their advantage, and to be made by them the seeds of good works. See Ezech. xviii. 4.

Under the scourges of heaven we have recourse to holy ceremonies, and exterior practices of religion; but, "will holy victims take away from thy malice?"—Jer. xi. 15. These must be accompanied with hearty repentance, as in the case of the Ninevites. "Let the man be converted from his evil way and from his iniquity, which is in his hands. Who knows if the Lord may be changed and forgive, and be turned from the fury of his wrath, and we shall not perish."—Jon. iii. 8, 9. But our conversion must be perfect and lasting: a relapse would draw on more grievous judgments. Thus, in sentiments of compunction, and practices of penance, we must labour to appease our offended God, as St. Gregory did in Rome, St. Charles in Milan, under a dreadful plague, till the striking angel may receive order to sheath his avenging sword. In the meantime, by patience, resignation, penance, and the exercise of charity, and other virtues, we shall satisfy the divine justice, sanctify our souls, advance in the love of God, give him the greatest proofs of our love in the sacrifice of ourselves, and heap up the greatest treasure in heaven.

Sidonius Apollinaris, a Gallican bishop, seeing Gaul laid waste by the Goths, under their barbarous king Evarix, writes on the ruins of his country, B. 7, Ep. 6, p. 426: "I bear all evils with patience, because it is the order of Providence, in the wise appointment of things, that the elect should be struck with ulcers and poverty, with Lazarus to have their happiness in the world to come, not with the rich glutton here; and when I consider the

punishments which I deserve, whatever adversities befal me seem too easy and too light. I also receive them cheerfully, as I know certainly that it is the greatest remedy and advancement of the interior man, if the exterior be beaten on the floor of this world by many strokes."—p. 428.

5. Tribulations are highly advantageous, not only because by them we expiate our sins, but still more because they most strongly move us to sincere and perfect repentance of our sins, and disengage our affections from the love and dangers of the world. They make men seek God more earnestly, and enter into themselves by a perfect repentance. "I cried loud to the Lord when I was afflicted."—Ps. cxix. "I found tribulation and sorrow, and I called upon the Lord."—Ps. cxiv. 4. "In my tribulation, I called upon the Lord, and cried out to my God."—Ps. xviii. 7. A certain secret self-sufficiency attends prosperity; adversity excites true repentance. What but tribulation is powerful enough to awaken the tepid, and to rouse the habitual sinner? It opened the eyes of the prodigal son (Luke, xv. 18), of Nabuchodonosor (Dan. iv. 26), of Manasses in Babylon (2 Par. xxxiii. 12), of the Jews in their captivity, and on every other occasion. Isa. xxvi. 16, &c. Hence God pronounces of them: "In their tribulation they will arise early to me; come, and let us return to the Lord."—Osee, vi. 1. How will innumerable happy souls eternally extol holy tribulation, to which they are indebted for their conversion and salvation, singing to God: "Your rod and your staff have comforted me."—Ps. xxii. 4. Our bodies under some disorders are not to be cured but by caustics and incisions; so it is with our souls. Tribulations are those caustics, those painful but necessary incisions which give us a true feeling of our extreme indigence and miseries.

Worldly prosperity is exceedingly dangerous to a soul, and brings with it great obstacles to salvation. A Christian must have his heart in heaven, where his treasure and inheritance are; he is a man of the other world, a child of promises, in which are all his hope and comfort; he is a stranger and pilgrim on earth. Now prosperity links him to this world, and fetters his affections by attachments and love of sensible objects, in which he finds a constant enjoyment and series of pleasure, which is a kind of fascination, binding and enchanting him. An unjust love of the world hence fills his soul, which nevertheless he does not perceive. He becomes fixed in this habitual disorder and state of sin, yet is insensible of it.

Besides this attachment to the earth, prosperity produces an excessive love of ourselves. Faith teaches us to hate ourselves, to mortify our inclinations and senses. But this inordinate self-love makes us seek ourselves in all things; *i. e.*, study always to please ourselves, gratify our will, and flatter our senses; it would make us the centre of all creatures round about us, and have nothing to be, nor to move, but for us. Hence, all who approach us must be attentive to our desires, inclinations, and passions, to accommodate themselves to them, because they can insinuate themselves into our good will only by this base artifice. Is not this for a man to make himself his divinity, to live almost only for himself, to refer everything to himself, to limit his affections, his desires, his fears, his hopes within himself? Hence, Christ pronounces such woes upon those who have their consolation in this world.

Thirdly, prosperity puffs up the mind. Pride is that inclination which our corrupt hearts are most susceptible of. It is hard, even under humiliations, to divest ourselves of it; but in temporal felicity it becomes quite insurmountable. It breeds a certain secret idea of vanity, and a false idea of a man's self, by which he regards himself as something, and confounds their exterior gifts, which are not himself, with himself, and forms an imaginary phantom of grandeur, which he takes for himself. The ridicule attendant on haughtiness makes him avoid that fault, and show himself affable and free to other men; but he nevertheless looks upon himself in his heart as a privileged person, raised above others, and really as something. "They are not in the labour of men, therefore pride has seized them."—Ps. lxxii. 5, 6. Everything about them fortifies this criminal impression; titles, rank, applause of men. The very ministers of the altars praising their lightest virtues, under pretence of animating those weak beginnings of piety, corrupt their source, and make them lose their merit: not but that worldly prosperity may be a gift of God to some faithful servants. But they must always carefully remember, that Providence bestows worldly advantages only to afford occasions of virtue by despising them, and by using them in charity to relieve others by them; that a Christian's only greatness is in his innocence and virtue, and that a sinner is the least and most wretched of creatures; that God will exact an account to the last farthing; that temporal favours are very dangerous; and a continual chain of them so great a danger, that no saint could ever support himself under it. Therefore, intervals of crosses and misfortunes are most wholesome, and absolutely necessary.

St. Chrysostom remarks (Hom. 8. in Matt.), that St. Joseph was first disturbed on seeing Mary with child. He was afterwards comforted by an angel, and by the birth of the child, who, the angels assured him, was to save his people. Immediately the fear of Herod's persecution, the joyful adoration of the Magi, the flight into a foreign land in great distress, successively follow one another. Thus, God intermingles comforts with sorrow, interweaves the lives of all his just with an admirable variety of prosperities and adversities, and suffers neither to be perpetual. Thus does he remove them from the dangers of both. "In the day of good things be not unmindful of evils; and in the day of evils, be not unmindful of good things; because it is easy before God in the day of death to reward every one according to his ways."—Eccl. xi. 27, 28. If Providence send continually the utmost temporal losses and afflictions, remember that it is a happiness to lose what it is not lawful to love. Prosperity always sails amidst rocks, and meets with dangers at every step. It is to many the heaviest of God's judgments and his most terrible curse. Whence, St. Anthony of Padua said: "There is no more evident sign of eternal damnation than a continued course of temporal success."—Serm. Dom. 12. post Pent. fol. 246. "These," says Minutius Felix, a learned ancient Father (Octav.), "are like victims fattened for slaughter, crowned to be sacrificed." This is that severe punishment which God often inflicts on the wicked, whom he abandons to their own passions and blindness; of which he says: "Let us show mercy to the wicked man," viz., in temporal prosperity, "and he will not learn justice."—Isa. xxvi. 10. Upon which words, St. Bernard exclaims: "This temporal mercy of God is more cruel than all indignation. Remove far from me that indulgence, excluding me from the paths of justice, O Father of mercies!"—Serm. 42. in Cant.

Add, that though adversity requires fortitude, and has its difficulties and dangers to be borne well, prosperity is always far more dangerous, as it is much harder for a man to command and govern his heart under it. Prosperity no sooner blows fair, than all that is light and empty in the soul is carried up by it. It stupefies men. Upon its least smiles they grow elate and scarcely know themselves. Hence, they often create their own miseries. Also, after a man has been accustomed to a series of success, and been delighted by it, he will be noways able to bear reverse of fortune, which, even should he equal the fortunate Polycrates, King of the Samians, he will be sure to meet with, and that soon.

Hence, Bishop Leslie, in his book of consolation to Mary Queen of the Scots, then in prison, commends that wise saying of Queen Catharine, the wife of King Henry VIII., that were it her part to choose, she would prefer a moderate fortune; but of the two, rather the most severe, than a constant gale of success; for no affliction was without its comfort; but continual prosperity always deprived men of their reason.* Faith sets this in the clearest light, showing that in prosperity passions are forfeited instead of being subdued, and sins not retrenched but multiplied, and their punishment reserved for a most rigorous hereafter; so that to pass this life without punishment would be the most dreadful punishment and effect of God's greatest indignation.

6. Tribulation not only removes the great dangers of a flattering worldly prosperity, but brings also the highest spiritual advantages.

First, it humbles us and gives a true knowledge of ourselves and our own weakness, which is the true foundation of all virtue.

Secondly, it makes us fly to God with the greatest fervour, as sailors in a storm. It is then that we offer to God the purest and most acceptable prayers, and that his ears are more open to hear us, as St. Chrysostom observes, in Ps. cxix. p. 329, t. 5.

Thirdly, it makes us truly and sincerely love and raise all our desires towards our heavenly country, and seek no comfort but in our assured hope of that ever blessed union with God in his kingdom of glory.

Fourthly, we learn by it that riches, men, &c., are not to be trusted in, and cannot assist us. It weans our hearts from the love of this world. The more perfectly we die to ourselves and to creatures, in the same proportion will our love of God be more pure and perfect, as this love of ourselves and of creatures is its grand obstacle and capital enemy in our hearts. The more this is subdued, the more abundantly is grace bestowed. Hence, the life of a true servant of God must be a continual martyrdom, full of outward bitterness and severity to nature, though inwardly full of joy and sweetness in God. Temporal afflictions contribute more to consummate this martyrdom than all interior or exterior mortifications can do, in which our own choice has a share, and under which something of self-love may always lurk. Hence,

* "Quem res plus nimio delectavere secundæ
Mutatæ quatiunt."—Hor. l. 1, Ep. 10.

Almighty God always manages opportunities of such sufferings in favour of his special servants, to procure them this perfect victory over themselves, and this necessary crucifixion of self-love in their hearts. It is impossible we should ever die to ourselves totally, but by being bruised in the mortar of tribulation. By exterior afflictions patiently borne, we banish from our affections all love of the world; we learn and feel its emptiness, folly, and falsehood, and that it will not, or cannot help us. "Evils abound in the world, that it may not be loved," says St. Augustine (Serm. lxxx.), "that the present life may grow bitter to thee, and that thou desire that to come."—En. in Ps. cxlviii. But interior trials are more severe and bitter, consequently of great merit; and these are of the highest advantage, as they tend powerfully to extirpate self-love, striking directly at its very root. We are sick of this spiritual disease. It is only by suffering that our health is to be recovered. This life is only for a time of trial and temptation. We live only to suffer. "We are appointed thereunto," says the Apostle, 2 Thess. It is time we should leave this world when we have no more to suffer. A patient must quit the hospital as soon as he is well.

7. God is most with us in suffering. The apostles in the storm thought they were perishing, and Jesus slept; Matt. viii.; but he was with them all the while. He would try their confidence in him, and make them earnestly cry to him. This happens daily under our eyes. God seems to abandon our souls. Temptations and afflictions seem to overwhelm us. It is so, because God knows the remedy we stand in need of; but he is ready and near us. A mother runs to attend a child suffering: so God to our cries. Tribulation makes us nearer and dearer to him, as it removes the hurry and obstacles of creatures, and places us in a state of suffering and of crucifixion resembling his Divine Son, and endearing us to his goodness. Hence, he then more readily hears our prayers, and more abundantly bestows his greatest graces, which are only to be gathered under Mount Calvary. The prosperous world is full and self-sufficient; the poor and patient suffering Christian is ordinarily best disposed for spiritual graces. We may seek God where we please; but we shall find him no where so perfectly on earth, as by humiliations and crosses, "With him I am in tribulation: I will deliver him and glorify him." Ps. xc. 15. "Our Lord is nigh to them that are of a contrite heart."—Ps. xxxii. 19. God communicates himself to none, except to those who depend on him.

It furnishes occasions of exercising the most heroic virtues, especially self-denial, the crucifixion of all our passions, the gaining of a complete victory over ourselves, patience, confidence in God, love of God, and the sacrifice of our will and our whole selves to God. For it is an act the most agreeable to God, and a perfect holocaust of ourselves, which we offer to him by bearing patiently afflictions for his sake. By this we acknowledge the supreme dominion of him, from whom we received all things, and to which we subject ourselves; we offer to him our goods by bearing the loss of them for his honour; our bodies with their organs, senses, and enjoyments, by receiving patiently all bodily pains; our will and souls by the anguish and privations which they endure. Is not this a total holocaust of all we have made to God, by a voluntary destruction of it? It is also an extirpation of our spiritual enemies, and a consuming of their very arms and instruments of malice. It is giving God the greatest proof of our fidelity and love. An ancient Father considering this cried out: "Oh! how beautiful a spectacle is it in the eyes of God, when a Christian sustains a combat with pain!"*—Minutius Felix, Octav. He valiantly triumphs over all the fury of Satan and hell, and courageously bears all the assaults of losses, grief, and pain, without suffering his mind to be injured by them. How much greater is this victory than the earthly triumphs of a Cæsar or an Alexander, by which they only cruelly oppressed their fellow-creatures, and were themselves the greatest slaves to their own passions? This is truly a great triumph in the eyes of God, who beholds attentively this great spectacle, together with all the innumerable legions of his heavenly court, and already holds the eternal crown over the head of the immortal conqueror.

It is the necessary trial of all virtue, purging it from all dross and rust of what might be human in it or its intention. "God tried them and found them worthy of himself. He proved them as gold in the furnace, and made them acceptable as the victim of holocaust."—Wisd. iii. 5, 6. "Gold and silver are tried in the fire; but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation."—Eccl. 5. "Because thou wert acceptable to God, it was necessary that tribulation should try thee."—Tob. xii. 13. "The elect bring forth fruit only in patience."—Luke, viii. 15. A man may appear humble, meek, patient, and adorned with all virtues, so long as he is not put to the test: but let him meet with crosses, humiliations, contradictions, &c., these will try and show what he really is.

* Quam pulchram spectaculum Deo, cum Christianus cum dolore congreditur.

8. It merits heaven. To what does God promise his kingdom? To worldly pleasures, riches, or ease? So one might imagine, when we see how Christians seek and delight in such things. But no. Faith teaches us, that nothing is more dangerous, nothing a greater sign of reprobation, than a continual series of worldly delights. The rich glutton enjoyed them; but he broils now in hell, because he had his consolation here. "Was this the cause of his torments? yes, the whole cause," cries out St. Bernard. Heaven is a kingdom of conquest; it must be taken by storm; it must cost fatigue and pains. It was purchased for us by the cross; nor can we enter it but through sufferings. This is the condition under which it is offered to us. Who can expect a triumph without fighting, a salary without labour, a prize without striving for it? Our very title to the kingdom of God is grounded only on our suffering for it. Christ, as a man, entered it by no other path. "He was to suffer to enter into his glory."—Luke, xxiv. 26. It is open to us by no other path than by following our head and leader. It is necessary that we also should enter the kingdom of heaven through many tribulations. A Christian looks for rest, and a paradise to come, not in this present life. This is the time of trial, not of enjoyment. "Why do you demand a crown before you have conquered? Why do you think of feasting before the end of your race? Behold the by-standers have their eyes fixed upon you; the champions stand yet in the field; and do you ask for repose before your time?"—St. Ambrose, Offic., l. 1, c. 16. To be united to Jesus in glory, we must here share in his sufferings. Let us not seek to enjoy, before God's appointed time. Eternity is long enough for enjoyment.

The portions of suffering, indeed, are different; but the recompense, above all bounds, is proportioned to them. Did we raise our eyes to heaven, we should rejoice in tribulation as momentary and light.

Let us set the smallness of the affliction against the weight of glory; and the transitory fleetness of the one, against the eternal stability of the other. A bliss eternal; without interruption, without conclusion; liable to no decays of nature, no wastings of time; nothing without to destroy it, nothing within to diminish or impair it. "Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven."—Matt. v. 12. "If labour and sweat were not joined to virtue, what recompense would it deserve?" says St. Maximus the martyr, Serm. 70, t. 2, p. 688.

Oh! did a soul know how much she honours God in suffering with patience; did she know the treasures of merit, which she

heaps up every moment of this martyrdom, she would never be willing to change her tears for any other state. The time of consolation is sweeter to her; but it is in patience that she merits more, that she labours, that she fights, that she makes to God the most agreeable sacrifices. Could she but here comprehend the happiness of suffering for God; if, illuminated by the purest lights of faith, she saw all its advantages, she would prefer it to all that is most agreeable in the world, and pronounce the cross more glorious than diadems, and St. Lewis more happy and greater under it than he could have been in the conquest of the East, and even in subduing it to the law of Christ.

9. By suffering we resemble Christ, and bear his image on earth. Members must correspond with their head. Jesus is the model, according to which we are formed. He is our example. As he bore his cross, so he commands us to carry ours after him. Matt. xvi. 24; Luke, xiv. 27. He suffered, not that we might live in delights, "but to leave us an example how we ought to follow his steps."—1 Pet. ii. 21. He offered himself to all tribulation, whatsoever his Father should be pleased to lay upon him. "Behold I come to do thy will."—Heb. x. 6. He passed his whole life in poverty, pains, and labours from his youth. Ps. lxxxvii. 16. He longed to be satiated with afflictions, and bathed in the baptism of his sufferings. Luke, xii. 50. He went out to meet his executioners, and voluntarily delivered himself into their hands. "Now, the disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his Lord"—Matt. x. 24, as he himself tells us. "Those whom God has called, he also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of his Son."—Rom. viii. 29. "If we be dead with him, we shall live also with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him."—2 Tim. ii. 11, 12. "We are the sons of God. And if sons, heirs also; heirs, indeed, of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; yet so if we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him."—Rom. viii. 17.

Can we appear agreeable before God in any other than the red livery, which his Son put on? This is certainly the most pleasing to him. Those who attend on the great ones of the world appear so clad and in such equipage as to do honour to their master, not in rags or in a disorderly manner, so as to be a disgrace to him; thus must they, who desire to be the attendants of Christ, be clad in such a manner as to do him honour, and to please him consequently, covered with poverty, abjection, contempt, and sufferings, at least in spirit; for it is in this that he places the

beauty of his train as well as of his person. If his servants appeared in riches, grandeur, honour, and pleasures, so as to be delighted with them, like the servants of the world, they would do an injury to their Divine Master, thus bearing the livery of his enemy, as a great servant of God writes:* "Let us go forth, therefore, to him without the camp, bearing his reproach," *i.e.*, his cross. Heb. xiii. 13.

10. Christ has foretold to us that we must suffer, if we belong to him; therefore, we are not to be dejected or scandalized at it. He tells us: "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you."—John, xv. 20. "You shall be hated by all men for my sake."—Matt. x. 22. "Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice sake, for their's is the kingdom of heaven."—Matt. v. 10. If, then, we are persecuted, reviled, and calumniated, even by persons supposed to be virtuous: if we suffer in goods, or in body, and health, we must remember, that this is the Christian's portion and happiness. The prince of the apostles tells us: "You are called unto this."—1 Peter, ii. 21. "If you suffer anything for justice sake, blessed are ye."—1 Peter, iii. 14. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."—2 Tim. iii. 12. "That no man should be moved in these tribulations; for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto."—1 Thess. iii. 3. A worldly spirit understands not this mystery of the cross, nor how precious it is in the eyes of God; it seems to such a folly and a scandal (1 Cor. i. 23); but to those that are called it appears as it is, the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Hence, when St. Peter, before he was filled with the perfect spirit of God, opposed our Saviour's passion, Christ severely reproved him, and called him an adversary, or Satan, saying: "Go behind me, Satan, thou art a scandal unto me; because thou savourest not the things that are of God, but the things that are of men."—Matt. xvi. 23.

Those whom God predestinates to his more extraordinary graces, he always purges by severer trials. Hence, when the two sons of Zebedee desired a high place in his kingdom, he asked them if they could drink of his cup of sufferings with him. Matt. xx. 22. And to express the future merits to which he would raise St. Paul, he mentions the great sufferings to which he had called him. "This man is to me a vessel of election; for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake."—Acts, ix. 16. If he promise a hundred fold of comforts in this life to his true followers, this is joined with persecution. Mark, x. 30.

* De Berniers, l. 1, c. 13, t. 2.

"Whom the Lord loves he will chastise."—Prov. iii. 12. "He who spares the rod hates his son."—Prov. xiii. 24. "The Lord scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. Persevere under discipline. God dealeth with you as with his sons; for what son is there whom the father doth not correct? But if you be without chastisement, whereof all are made partakers, then are you bastards, and not sons."—Heb. xii. 7, 8. "These thou hast tried as a father admonishing them; but those thou hast condemned as a hard king."—Wis. xi. 11. "He deals not with us as with other nations, whom he patiently expects, that, when the day of judgment shall come, he may punish them in the fulness of their sins."—2 Matt. vi. 14. Upon which lessons of the divine wisdom St. Augustine writes (En. 2. in Ps. 31): "Do not hope to be without a scourge, unless you think of being disinherited. He scourges every son whom he receives. What, every one? Where then would you hide yourself? Every one; and not one is excepted; not one will be without a scourge; even the only one without sin yet is not without a scourge." And in another place, in Ps. 36: "See what he bore for you, who had no cause of suffering. Howmuch soever you undergo, you will not come up to his insults, his thorny crown his ignominious garments and cross."

11. Suffering, therefore, is the true Christian's joy. "Rejoice under scourges; because the inheritance is preserved for you. Choose for yourself temporal labour or eternal torment, whichever you prefer," says St. Augustine in Ps. 93. Tribulation is the pledge of our happiness. "Count it all joy, when you shall fall into divers temptations."—James, i. 2. The apostles, having been scourged by the Jews, "went from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus."—Acts, v. 41. St. Paul testifies: "I am filled with comfort; I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation."—2 Cor. vii. 4. "I please myself in my infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ."—2 Cor. xii. 10.

It is his glory. Thus "Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasure of the Egyptians."—Heb. xi. 26. St. Peter tells his suffering flock: "If you be reproached for the name of Christ, you shall be blessed; for that which is of the honour, glory, and power of God, and that which is his spirit resteth upon you."—1 Pet. iv. 14. And St. Paul thus congratulates his dear Philippians: "Unto you it is given for Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him."—Phil. i. 24.

As to himself he says: "We glory in tribulations."—Rom. v. 13. St. Chrysostom (Hom. 16. ad Pop Ant., p. 160) observes that St. Paul everywhere glories in his sufferings, never in his graces or miracles, and that labour and crowns, tribulations and pardon go everywhere together. He observes, that this Apostle styles himself the prisoner for Christ, glorying in this title more than in all other gifts, more than in the highest earthly dignities and honours. For to suffer for God is of all things we can do or receive in this world, the most high and the most safe. It is a blessing which God imparts to his beloved children and friends. As As souls are dearer to him, he usually gives them a greater share herein.

"Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ," says he (Eph. iii. 1); upon which words, St. Chrysostom writes thus, Hom. 8. in Eph.: "It is a more illustrious title to be a prisoner for Christ, than to be either an apostle, or a doctor, or an evangelist. This is a great dignity, and greater than any kingdom or consulship. He who loves Christ would rather be in chains for him than dwell in heaven. No glittering crown adorns a head so much as a chain borne for Christ. If one had given me the choice of all heaven or of this chain, I should take the chain. If I might have stood with the angels above, near the throne of God, or bound with Paul, I should have preferred the prison. Nothing is more happy than this chain. I do not pronounce Paul so happy, because he was taken up in a rapture into paradise, as that he bore this chain. Had you rather have been the angel loosing Peter in chains, I had rather have been Peter. This gift of chains is something greater than to stop the sun, to move the world, or to command the devils."—Hom. 8. in Ephes.

12. If I consider all the saints from Abel downwards, I shall find they all met with persecutions and afflictions; all walked in the high road of the cross. It was by this path that the graces of God descended to them, and through it they all mounted up to God: for this is the road leading to the city of the King of kings, opened to men by our crucified Saviour. All the holy patriarchs, prophets, and ancient saints walked in it with Abraham, Moses, Job, Tobias, David, Elias, &c., as St. Paul sums them up. Heb. xi. "Others were racked; others had trials of mockeries and stripes, of bands and prisons; they were stoned, they were cut asunder, they were tempted, they were put to death by the sword, they wandered about in sheep-skins, in goat-skins, being in want, distressed, afflicted, of whom the world was not worthy; wandering in deserts, in mountains, in dens, and in caves of the earth."

The King of all the saints, he who is the way and the life, the model of all the souls that shall be saved, ran in this path as a giant, in labours, contumelies, pains, and torments, from the first moment of his conception, to his last breath on the cross. He had chosen suffering for his inseparable and beloved spouse, and lived and died in its closest embraces. In this same way all the great troop of the saints follow him, every one bearing his cross, generally the greater as they are nearer and dearer to him. At their head walked his glorious mother bearing in her devout soul all the pains and anguishes which he felt; St. John the Evangelist, his favourite disciple, St. Peter, the other apostles, martyrs, virgins, and confessors, faithfully accompanied him; all were made his friends only through many trials. These now make up the radiant jewels of their immortal crowns. For any one to appear in this blessed company, not resembling the rest, would be a monster in paradise. It is absolutely necessary that all enter the kingdom of God through many tribulations. He who would pretend to find another path would go without a guide, would fall into the hands of robbers and murderers in the way, or wander astray and perish in precipices and pit-falls, which the paths of worldly pleasures and delights are filled with.

The carnal wisdom of worldly pride and sensuality, as it is an enemy of the cross, can never understand this heavenly doctrine. It cries out: Can God, who is all goodness, delight in the sufferings of a creature? His pleasure, indeed, is to make his dear creatures happy. His first design was to have made man so by paths of pure and holy delights; but since he has lost himself, and is become sick, he is to be restored by bitter means, by graces derived from the sufferings of our crucified God, and applied to our souls by our own sufferings. For, innocence itself, our Lord, King, and God, did not undergo so much that the rebellious creature and sinner should be saved without drinking of the same cup after him. It is just, and by the holy order of Providence it is necessary, that we also should suffer, first, to satisfy for our own sins; secondly, to purify us from our daily imperfections; thirdly, to overcome self-love and our passions; fourthly, to make us members conformable and proportioned to our head; lastly, to enrich us with his graces, and crown us with his glory. Does not a parent love his son, when he prescribes him a bitter portion in his sickness? Or a king some favourite nobleman, when he sends him to the wars only to procure him the honour and advantages of a triumph? But who

are we, to dispute the wisdom and mercy of God in his choice of the means to save us? We are not, indeed, to make or choose our own crosses. That would be presumption, and against the order of Providence. It is our duty to receive from God, and to bear those which he shall be pleased to lay upon us for our good.

13. Suffering also with patience is the most heroic act of divine love. Martyrdom is its most perfect act, as Christ himself declares. All are not called to a trial of blood, but every one is called to give a proof of his love and fidelity by suffering, which may be its test and a kind of martyrdom. What love is that which does or suffers nothing for its beloved? True love ever burns to be acting; feels no greater pleasure than to find an occasion of giving proof of itself; the more difficult or painful it is, the greater proof will it appear to be; the heart, therefore, seizes it with greater ardour and delight.

He who knows the riches of true love, knows also those of the cross, its inseparable companion; for he is sensible that, if he refuse to suffer, he can never vanquish self-love within himself, but must ever be rotting in its dunghill, and never obtain the pure love of God. He also knows, that sufferings are the fuel of divine love, by which it is most inflamed: and likewise its trial and test, and the most perfect sacrifice of itself that it is capable of offering. Hence, all true lovers of God are lovers of his cross. Love pants after it as fire requires fuel to enkindle, nourish, and inflame itself more and more. See how the fire, which burned in the breast of St. Ignatius, of Antioch, thus thirsted to find a fuel suitable to it; to be restrained, not to be permitted to act, and break out, and dilate itself, beyond measure, was to it a constraint quite intolerable, and, as it were, a torment. It wanted wild beasts, racks, fires, breaking of bones, all the greatest torments to refresh and comfort it. The martyr trembled lest he should lose the hope of dying for Christ. To labour to promote the kingdom of divine love in the hearts of other men, and to cultivate it in his own by ardent prayer and virtue, had, till then, been objects of his desires, and a continual fuel to his flame; but at length the expectation of martyrdom made him recommend the soul of others to God, and his flock to St. Polycarp, and to forget every other means of labouring to satisfy his ardour. He saw himself called to the cross, and to sacrifice himself entirely to enjoy his God speedily, by laying down his life for his honour; therefore, he could con-

tain himself no longer, but abandoned himself entirely to this zeal for suffering. "I write to you," says he, in his seraphic letter to the Romans, "seized with the love of dying. There is not in me a fire-loving water. If any one possess my God in himself, let him understand what I desire, and pity me. Let him, from what he feels boiling in his breast, judge from his own experience what my pain is, and say there is no other means to satiate the fire that devours me, except that I be ground to powder by the teeth of the beasts, and so make a bread fit for my Master's table. In vain would any pretend to comfort me by preventing my martyrdom, through interest or intercessions with the Emperor, and giving me to hope some other way of testifying my love for Jesus Christ. Such a consolation is but water, and agrees not with that fire which consumes me, and which will admit no allay or mitigation."

We owe to God a gratuitous love; not for rewards, &c., but as he has loved us gratis. How do you know that ours is such, except by tribulation? If we love, we accordingly desire to give God proofs of it by trials. "Prove me, O Lord! and try me."— Ps. xxv. 2. Earthly prosperity would make our love mercenary.

Have I any spark of this true love in my breast, who am so impatient under the least trials? who am discomposed at a look, a word, a tone of the voice, or the least contradiction or cross?

DISCOURSE LXIV.

ON TEMPORAL AFFLICTIONS IN PARTICULAR.

1. MAN may suffer by as many different sorts of crosses as he has faculties, powers, and passions in his soul, senses, and members in his body, and objects either spiritual or corporal out of himself, by which he may feel any pain or affliction in mind or body.

"We fall not into afflictions, because God is either unable or unwilling to help us, since he is both the sovereign of the world, and the lover of his servants. But he tries and examines us by adversity, and makes calamities the touchstone of our virtue, and proves the will of man to the last extremity, even unto death, well knowing that nothing can be lost to him. Therefore, we are no otherwise tried by afflictions than gold is purified by the

fire. How fair a spectacle in the sight of God is a Christian entering the lists with affliction, and with a noble firmness braving and encountering menaces and torments?"—Min. Felix in Octavio.

As to temporal goods, we must always remember they are most fickle and uncertain, sometimes in the possession of one, sometimes of another, as a bird perching one hour in our garden, and the next in a neighbour's; nor are they any more to be depended upon. Ever to count upon what is so inconstant, or regard it as properly ours, is unreasonable and pernicious to our souls. We came naked into this world; if God has favoured us with more than subsistence from day to day, it is what above half the world has not, and to which we had no previous title preferably to them; this distinction has been the pure gift of God, whether crowning our industry with this blessing, or granting it to our birth. If the same Sovereign Lord be pleased now to take it even all away, we have still reason to thank him for the past enjoyment, and also for this, that now in his mercy, and out of no less goodness to us, he has been pleased to deprive us of it, saying with Job: "I came naked out of my mother's womb, and I shall return thither naked; the Lord gave, the Lord has taken away; as it has pleased the Lord, so it is done; be the name of the Lord blessed."—Job, i. 21. "If we have received good things from the hand of God, why should we not also receive evil?"—Job, ii. 10. Has not God yet left us more temporal resources than to many thousands? If it be his will that we should even perish by starving and hunger, it is what has befallen several great and good men. Belisarius, the conqueror of those nations which had overthrown the Roman empire, is said by some to have at last begged farthings from door to door. St. Theresa used to say, if it were God's will we should even die of hunger, why should we fear to leave the world that way more than any other? as die we must. "Although he shall kill me, I will hope in him."—Job, xiii. 15. But he who strikes can as easily restore again, as he did to Job, whensoever he shall see it good.

We must likewise reflect, that the goods of this life are no real goods, except as they may be conducive to our salvation; otherwise they are evils extremely pernicious to our souls. If we grieve immoderately at their loss, it is certain our hearts were too much wedded to them. If God remove these idols, it is to destroy the idolatry of our souls, and raise our affections to himself; it is for a trial of our love, and to furnish us with occasions

of greater crowns. If we patiently submit to this cross, we make to God a ready and cheerful sacrifice of our earthly substance, and this in the most perfect manner, and as he requires it from our hands. In this spirit the primitive Christians rejoiced in such losses, commending their children and friends to the fatherly providence of God, of whom St. Paul could say: "You received with joy the plunder of your goods, knowing that you have a better and a lasting substance."—Heb. x. 34.

2. The loss of honour or reputation is to many a severe trial; and it must be confessed that it disqualifies a person for the world, and deprives him of many comforts and advantages in social life. But if we consider it truly, how trivial a thing is worldly honour in itself! a mere empty bubble, a nothing. If it dazzle in the eyes of a foolish mob; if it draw huzzas, flatteries, and cringings; these are usually only forced, and do not proceed from true esteem or affection; those who pay them often conceive at the same time the greatest sentiments of scorn for their persons in their hearts, could these but be penetrated. If they are sincere, which will seldom be known, still what are they? something exterior to the man, giving him no true merit, and even most inconstant in themselves, vain and little as they are; so that no man can ever enjoy a moment's solid peace of mind in them for fear of losing them; they must perpetually rack and disturb him in the midst of his foolish enjoyment. But as to the soul, and a man's true good and virtue, honour is very dangerous, and generally most pernicious: for if a man do not find any titillation of delight in it, it must be a grievous slavery and burden; if he be pleased with it, he becomes a prey to ambition and worldly pride. And how is it possible he should live in honour, without being insensibly infected with this vice? Herod Agrippa could listen to the acclamation, that he was a god who spoke (Acts, xii. 22); and though he doubtless never believed so gross and monstrous an absurdity, the applause tickled and inwardly swelled his heart. Indeed all earthly honour is the grand incentive of pride, and it is easier to touch pitch and not be defiled by it, than for the corruption of the human heart not to be secretly tainted in honour. Only an extraordinary grace can maintain humility under it. This, alas! how few labour to obtain!

The more ordinary course of Divine Providence is to lead souls to humility and grace by removing them from this dangerous rock, and conducting them through the ways of humiliations and crosses. Christ chose them himself; declared our happiness to consist in

them; and proposed them for the object of his disciples' holy ambition. Every Christian is bound at least not to please himself in worldly honour. Can he then grieve to see himself deprived of it? The designs of the divine mercy and of his spiritual advantages are too evident in this worldly loss, not to be at least an over balance in his mind, and hinder him from looking upon it as a cross.

As to a good reputation, it may be serviceable, and seem even necessary to promote God's honour; nor ought any man to prostitute it by infamous actions. Yet a love or fondness of it is ever criminal, and most fatal to the soul; for nothing is more secure or advantageous to her virtue then humiliations. According to the judgment of carnal wisdom, never was reputation more necessary than in our great Redeemer; yet, he chose a hidden life for above thirty years, and, after many humiliations during his divine mission, closed it by his ignominious passion and death. Is not this sufficient to show us, that it is by the ignominy of the cross his glory is to be truly propagated, as well as virtue cultivated in our own souls? If, then, he be pleased to deprive us of our reputation, ought we not to embrace this trial as a great mercy? As to the necessity of a good name, for temporal or spiritual good ends, ought we not to leave it to God to execute his work by the means his wisdom chooses, and receive his most wholesome grace with resignation, and even joy and thanksgiving? We can do nothing so much to promote God's honour, and enlarge his grace in our souls, as to become crucified to the world in our hearts, and that it be crucified to us; and that we arrive at the strictest union with our blessed Redeemer, who, from his birth in the manger, to his death on the cross, met with a perpetual contradiction from the world, to show us that we must be entirely dead to all sentiments of its honour, for his grace to triumph in our souls. And when we meditate on the life of Christ, are we not obliged to cry out with St. Theresa: "Is it possible that I should desire any one should entertain a good opinion of me, since I see you, my God, so treated on earth?" We must learn, that the world and all things out of God are nothing, and that he alone is all. This sentiment must be practically engraven on our hearts. This is the touchstone of the pure love of God, which can be acquired only by the tribulation of the world.

3. We seem surprised to meet with calumnies and persecutions from men; to see ourselves condemned or suspected of things, from which, of all persons living, we are the most remote; to find, perhaps, nothing but contradictions from all quarters, the

good as well as the bad tearing our good names to pieces by slander, putting sinister interpretations upon our most innocent intentions and actions, and making it a point of zeal to defeat all our designs and cross and thwart all our measures and undertakings. Why? was not this the case of our Divine Master? He was, as it were, set up for a butt or mark to be contradicted. "The disciple is not above his master." He has foretold, that all who follow him shall meet with the same treatment. If we were of the world it would love us as its own, and would even fight for us and defend us. It persecutes us, because we are opposite to its maxims and ways. As we are Christ's, we must expect to be treated by it as its enemies, and it is our happiness, our crown, our security and preservation, that we should be so. Were not all the apostles thus treated by it? Were not the primitive Christians? What cruel and bloody persecutions did they not undergo? What scorn, what calumnies were they attacked by, notwithstanding the innocence, purity, and sanctity of their lives? They were accused of eating child's flesh in their holy mysteries in the blessed Eucharist; of adoring an ass; nay of infamous lusts. Tert. Apolog., &c.

The Church grew under these trials, and was filled with saints and martyrs. St. Cyprian observed that, if the persecutions ceased but for a short interval, many fell from the spirit of the Gospel. Peace from the world, sloth, ease, and some earthly enjoyments, enamoured some with this life, and injured virtue more than the sword could do; for the spirit of religion flourishes most amidst persecutions. It is a flower that grows best among the pricking thorns. The rage of bloody persecutions is over; the world is become Christian: but, as St. Augustine asks (in Ps. lxix. p. 2), "Is the devil also become Christian?" As long as he reigns prince of this world, God will permit him, in one shape or other, to persecute his servants, and this for their good. Hence, Christ gives them this participation of his cross for their portion and inheritance, sweetened, indeed, and made light by his inward peace and consolations, and by the unction of his grace. The character of a Christian and that of the world differ chiefly in this point: "Amen, Amen, I say unto you, that you shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice; and you shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrows shall be turned into joy." —John, xvi. 20. "Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake."—Matt. v. 11.

4. The persecution which the servants of God meet with from

the wicked, who are not able to bear the light of their example, is something grand and honourable, and so, not altogether contrary to human nature; or at least, it is what virtue always expects. But that is more severe to self-love, is more difficult and more meritorious to be borne in silence, which they receive from good men, either mistaken, or misled in their regard, so that they think it a part of zeal and merit before God to oppose them, often with violence. This persecution is sometimes really moved by passion, acting under the colour of zeal. This kind of suffering is a total crucifixion of self-love in all its shapes; and, as it is usually more severe, so patience and silence under it are the more meritorious and advantageous. See remarkable examples of this in the lives of St. Theresa, St. John of the Cross, and of innumerable other eminent saints. The true servant of God, Henry Mary Boudon, Archdeacon and Grand Vicar of Evreux, for his extraordinary sanctity and zealous missions was highly esteemed by his bishop, the Queen of France, &c.; but happening, by his zeal, to have offended some false brethren, a storm broke out against him. His bishop interdicted him upon false accusations, which he bore in silence; preachers declaimed against him from the pulpit, whom he bid to have no scruple for anything they said against him, and assisted himself at their invectives; abandoned and persecuted by all, driven from Evreux, he lay sick in a garret in Paris for two days, without anything to eat, and suffered much more before his innocence was publicly acknowledged, always joyful. The most sensible persecutions are those which we meet with from our dearest friends, in whom we ought to find a comfort and a refuge. This circumstance drew the most bitter complaints from David and from our Redeemer himself, by the mouth of the prophets. Pious souls, that received other trials with joy, found it a sensible stroke to see themselves rejected even by their spiritual friends; yet a Christian, whose life consists in the Spirit and in grace, finds the greatest advantages in the most rigorous privations and sufferings of nature. The more he is abandoned by creatures, the more is the very root of earthly affections and consolations extirpated out of his heart; and the more perfectly he is empty of creatures, the more purely he will be filled with God alone. Can we ever be so entirely forsaken by creatures as our blessed Redeemer was in his sacred passion? His example ought to make this state amiable to us. Courage, my soul, under this trial. It is sweet to tread in the steps of a God-man. It is sweet to be abandoned by

creatures, to feel their emptiness, and to learn that the sons of men are false and treacherous, so as henceforward to place confidence only in God. O happy exchange! God for creatures. This consideration made St. Francis of Sales be charmed with the very thought of this state, in which a soul, forsaken and forgotten by all creatures, finds no relish but in God, who enters her so much the more abundantly, and fills her with his consolations so much the more sweetly. And the soul, forsaken by all creatures under heaven, tastes and more purely sees God, who, when all men abandon us, will not forsake us.

The loss of near and dear friends by death is also a great and frequent affliction to us. By it we die partially before our own death; but one of the most bitter circumstances in our own death is the separation from our friends. Generally the most sensible and noble of all the enjoyments of life, in a disinterested, tender mind, is that of friendship; and from this arise the purest and greatest satisfactions of life. The total loss of a near friend deprives a man of all these, and makes him appear to himself, in all his actions, as if he had lost some limb or part of himself. Something is to be allowed to nature in this case, provided grief be not indulged, or suffered to go to any excess. A stoical apathy is far from the tender bowels of the saints. The blessed Virgin wept for her divine Son, &c.; St. Ambrose mourned the loss of Theodosius; Gratian, his brother Satyrus; and St. Bernard that of his brother Gerard. Hardness or insensibility is no part of virtue. But then a lively faith and an ardent love of God raise the soul above temporal things, and the consideration of his adorable will in all events silences very much even the emotions of nature. Whence, St. Chrysostom (Serm. 5. de Laz., t. 1, p. 765): "I do not condemn grief for the death of a friend, but excess of grief. To mourn is nature, but to mourn beyond bounds, madness and frenzy. Mourn, but be not impatient. Give thanks, to adorn your deceased friend; as death is to be regarded as a Christian's gain. If you are impatient, you are injurious to your departed friend, you offend God, and hurt yourself; but if you give thanks, you honour the deceased, glorify God, and procure great benefit to yourself."

To indulge grief on such an occasion is both unreasonable and unnatural, because our sighs are all in vain; nay, they waste our own life and impair our health to no sort of use; and whereas all men desire happiness, we, on the contrary, fret and make ourselves miserable, increasing the load of our misfortunes. How

would our deceased friend, were it allowed, reproach us and grieve himself, out of compassion for our madness and folly! We likewise by it betray a great weakness of mind, beneath true courage and fortitude, which chiefly consist in bearing well, with patience and resignation, the crosses to which nature, and Providence its ruler, subject us. Hence, the very heathens looked upon it as barbarous and beneath a rational man. David said very well, when his favourite child was dead: "Whilst he lived, I fasted and prayed; for I said: who knows if the Lord may perchance give him to me, and the child may live. But now he is dead, why should I fast? Shall I be able to recall him again? I shall rather go to him; but he will return no more to me."—2 Kings, xii. 22.

6. Religion, moreover, teaches us that it is heathenish, and argues a want of faith. More was allowed to the Jews in mourning for their dead, the gate of heaven not being opened before the death of Christ, as St. Bernard observes; but now that we have all reason to hope that God has called our friend hence in mercy, and that he is now crowned with glory, can we grieve for his happiness? Perhaps, had he lived, he would have been the subject of greater griefs and many miseries to us, and of great evils to himself. We are to look upon his death as a design of God's paternal mercy upon him. "He hastened to draw him out of the midst of iniquities."—Wisd. iv. 11. Oh! what secrets shall we see in the next life! We shall then sing hymns of joy and thanksgiving for what made us weep here. Is it an evil to be drawn by an all-wise and merciful Father out of dangers and miseries? What conflicts, scandals, seductions, and temptations, in which the elect themselves, if possible, would be overcome, does not a longer life expose to! If we fear the uncertainty of his lot, have we not reason to acquiesce in the bosom of God's mercies, to whom the departed person was always dearer than he could be to us? "How absurd is it to call heaven much better than this earth, yet to mourn for those who depart thither in peace?"—St. Chrysostom, l. 4. ad Vid. Junior, t. 1, p. 341. "First, he would have seen heaven later; which is not a small loss. Add, that the cares of this world would not have dismissed him so pure and entire as he now was."—Ib. St. Fulgentius, writing to the lady Galla on a similar occasion, says: "Do not think him lost, but sent before; imagine not his youth immaturely cut off, which you see firmly established, being fixed and strengthened by an unchangeable eternity."—Ep. 2, c. 2.

It is then ourselves and our own loss that we weep for. Is not this too much self-love? Does not this argue that our affections were so much set on him as to be an obstacle to the pure love of God? It made us forget our present banishment. God takes away the poison; and we grieve as a little child, when his mother takes from him a knife he was going to stab himself with. But this friend is not absolutely taken from us: he is only happily removed to immortality, to wait until we be speedily re-united to him. God thus weans our hearts from this earth as it were, in spite of us, obliging us to raise all our desires to heaven, whither he has already called part of us, in our friend, to make our whole hearts ascend to him. We are all hastening to eternity, to meet there, never more to be separated.

Add, that repining on such an occasion is injurious to God, who has called away his own creature, not ours. Why do we complain, if he has taken to himself his own servant?

But under such afflictions, we ought not to reason with ourselves, or dwell on our calamities; the sensitive part of our soul is not to be governed by such means. Grief, then, is to be repressed by short aspirations, drawn from these motives; and our mind applied calmly to other things, by occupying ourselves in prayer, by grave company and serious employments, which may engross our attention; for such as are jocose and amusing would neither be decent nor suit the serious turn of our mind on such occasions.

7. The greatest of all trials are grievous interior anguishes of the soul. No one knows the severity of this martyrdom but those who have felt it. It is, however, most advantageous to the soul, that she may entirely die to herself, and be crucified in all her powers. Divine Providence usually conducts through it, in some degree or other, all those whom God afterwards raises to his greatest favours, and to the highest perfection, especially in the contemplative life; for in the active, exterior trials often do great part of the work, so that these interior sufferings are not so violent. Whence, St. Theresa remarks, that the trials and labours in the contemplative life are much severer than in the active. Exterior trials have moreover the satisfaction of several comforts, which the interior are deprived of; and as these are hidden, and known only to those who bear them, no one bemoans, pities, or comforts a soul under them. She has only God and his angels witnesses of what she suffers. But as this trial is both greater and more void of all comfort from creatures, it contributes more effectually to work the division of the soul and spirit, or to crucify her to

nature, to her senses, passions, self-love, and all creatures, that she may be prepared for the love of God perfectly to reign in her. It is also the highest trial of her fidelity to God. Souls who seek to serve God in the ease and sweets of contemplation, must not expect that the kingdom of God should cost them nothing. This is contrary to the stated order of Divine Providence. Hence, God exercises souls by severe trials, after his first comforts in the beginning of their conversion, before he bestows on them his more extraordinary favours. By giving him these proofs, by making to him these sacrifices of themselves, they remove all obstacles to his perfect reign in their hearts, and draw down his complacency upon them, and are fitted to receive his most precious gifts and graces. They bear the image of their crucified Redeemer, who, besides his exterior torments, was pleased to suffer this inward martyrdom of the soul, in feeling the most bitter anguish, which he expressed in his agony, crying out: "My soul is sorrowful unto death;" and on the cross, when he said: "Father, why hast thou forsaken me?"

8. These inward trials consist sometimes in involuntary fears, scrupulosity, obstinate temptations of importunate thoughts of infidelity, blasphemy, despair, or the like, which have no other effect than to fill the soul with extreme interior anguish; sometimes in a spiritual dryness, so great that the soul seems never to have had any trace of true virtue, or sentiment of devotion. This state is often accompanied with a spiritual darkness and a sort of insensibility.

These ways have less danger of any mixture of self-love; consequently they have more of the pure love of God in them, and are more powerful for the divine union; as in them there is less of nature, the crucifixion of which they are, and they have more of grace. God permits the devil to try his servants, as he did Job; he therefore assaults them with his utmost rage and fury. He sees their fervour, and dreads their spirit of mortification and humility. He therefore leaves nothing undone to ruin them. All hell enters into a conspiracy, and leagues itself to raise persecutions, to darken and obscure all their interior powers, and to fill them with the most terrible images; but God will not permit them to be tempted above their strength, and permits all this only for their good. By exterior trials the soul is weaned from all creatures out of herself; by the inward martyrdom in all her powers, each of them is purged; the sensitive faculty, the intellectual, the imagination, and the will. God, for this end, seems,

as it were, to strike the soul so as to cause inexpressible pain; abandons her imagination to distractions as to troublesome images; deprives her understanding of her lights, and the will of its spiritual relish and sensible affections. But these annihilations of all the senses and faculties are most agreeable martyrdoms and sacrifices of them all to God, as they cannot otherwise be crucified to creatures and disposed for God to reign in them. Thus, his conduct seems full of rigour, but it is, in reality, the effect of an unspeakable mercy. Men's souls sick with sin, or at least weakened and corrupted by its dregs which they yet bear, can be neither healed nor washed perfectly by ordinary means. God, the true physician of souls, applies his own divine hand; and, because our disease requires painful application, we ought a thousand times to kiss his merciful hand, and melt in gratitude and thanksgiving for the care with which he works our sanctification by extraordinary means; with which he treats only his favourites. Under these trials a soul must look upon the way of suffering as the best, the most pure, and the securest.

St. Theresa says (l. de Viâ Perf.) that a soul advances more in receiving a suffering from God than she could in ten years by means of her own choice. She must regard herself as happy to have a share in the sufferings of Christ; must patiently persevere in prayer under all states of dryness; and must humbly submit and follow the sentiments of an experienced director; for we must always renounce our own judgment and the conduct of ourselves. Physicians, when sick themselves, consult others. This submission of our own direction is absolutely necessary. We gain more by it than by a thousand instructions, and by all the austerities and devotions we could practise. Many have long laboured and prayed in vain to be delivered from interior fears and anguishes, which at last one simple submission to their confessor has at once freed them from. God demands the submission of our understanding and will; without this we labour in vain. But we must expect the time of his salvation in patience. He knows our necessities, and will adapt the remedy to them. All our interior is a fund of corruption, a sink filled with loads of filth amassed by vicious habits, all springing from self-love, the stinking principle of all the corrupted motions of our hearts. God probes its depth, and measures by it the work of the evacuation. He is a skilful, though tender surgeon. As he sees the full extent of our inveterate wounds, he commences his operation, and cuts off and destroys whatever is corrupted and mortified in them. Affliction

is the fire, by which he consumes all that is putrefied in them. By it each of our faculties is to be purified.

Under states of spiritual dryness, we must consider that in this life we walk as it were in a desert. If we receive the dew of a heavenly manna, this is a favour by no means our due, belonging only to faithful servants. We must consider such dryness as the just punishment of our sensual hearts, which had too much fed themselves on the filth of this earth. Sometimes we are to regard them as sent to give us a spiritual thirst of God, and make us cry ardently after him; and sometimes as a disposition for the deluges of heavenly comforts which God would prepare us for. We must humble and reproach ourselves, that this punishment is most justly due to us, so sensual as we are, and so tepid in seeking God, and that by making an ill use of them, we oppose God's merciful designs in them. We must be firmly persuaded that our hearts are too impure to taste the gifts of God, and that all their impurities must be first cleansed away; and that it is just we should be deprived of heavenly consolations, who have made ourselves drunk with those of the earth.

As St. Gregory of Nyssa expostulates with great eloquence (Or. 1. de Orat. t. 1, p. 722): "It is most absurd to ask temporal things from him who offers goods which are everlasting, earthly, instead of heavenly, base and abject, instead of the most precious, transitory smoke from him who is ready to bestow the kingdom of heaven," &c.

DISCOURSE LXV.

ON BODILY AFFLICTIONS OR SICKNESS.

1. After Job had lost his whole estate and all his children, by sudden dreadful calamities, the devil still said that his virtue would not be proof under sickness. "A man will give all that he has for his life and health: but stretch out thy hand and touch his face and his flesh, and thou wilt see that he blesses thee," *i. e.*, loses his patience, said he to God. Whence St. Chrysostom (p. 14. ad Olymp. Ep. 4, t. 5, p. 598), observes, that a grievous sickness is the greatest of trials. For a very painful sickness is often more severe than any exterior trials; as it is interior, and a man feels its whole weight within himself. By it he is made incapable of any exterior delights and enjoyments, and he suffers in

his senses and flesh the sharpest tortures and pains. Yet this, in some degree at least, is the portion of all men. The king, the rich, and the voluptuous, are no more exempt from its scourge than the meanest beggar; nay, by their riotous high life, sometimes prepare for themselves a large portion. It then behoves all men to arm themselves for this trial by a sufficient stock of patience. It is a visit of mercy, a time of the greatest spiritual advantages, the harvest of virtue; yet, as the devout author of "The Imitation of Christ" complains, "Few are made better from sickness." Such as they were, such they die, or such they remain after their recovery. This proceeds from the little care men take to sanctify themselves by it, and from those worldly spirits being destitute of the sentiments of virtue, whereby they are entirely indisposed to profit by it. To consider the nature of sickness, and the spiritual advantages it brings, we must reflect, first, that man having forfeited the state of immortality in which he was created, sickness is now become a necessary appendix of his nature and his sorrowful inheritance. The sentence of our mortality (Gen. ii. 17) subjects him to it. He carries the seeds of various distempers in his body; uncertain what they are, or when or how some of them will break out and devour him, as every member, organ, fibre, or fluid, ever so small, may become the subject of several sorts. No privilege of birth, rank, riches, wit, or learning; no strength of constitution or confirmed state of health can secure any man from its continual threat. The king as well as the beggar is liable to be made its prey. Many struggle with it all the days of their lives, others frequently suffer its conflicts. All expect it, at least, as the passage to death. This then is the general trial of all the sons of Adam. All must prepare themselves for it; all must bring the necessary dispositions to sanctify themselves by making a good use of it.

2. We must also reflect, that the spiritual advantages of sickness are innumerable. It often awakens the soul from sin. "God reproves by sorrow in bed."—Job, xxxiii. 19. "Then he opens the ears of men, and teaching them instructs them in discipline."—v. 12. How many have been converted from sin by sickness? How many have been brought by it to renounce the world like St. Ignatius of Loyola? We may truly address the sick man in the words of Tertullian (l. de Pat., c. 11): "O happy that servant, whose amendment the Lord himself takes in hand, to whom he vouchsafes to show his anger; whom he does not deceive by dissembling and silence!" This is the pastoral

staff of the good shepherd, by which he brings back into the pastures of life those sheep that were gone astray.

It often preserves from sin. The heart of Ezechias was puffed up with prosperity, but humbled by sickness. 4 Kings, xx. It removes the oppertunities and occasions of many sins; it extinguishes powerfully the most dangerous passions, the love of honour, of pleasures, and the like; for how can a man think of what he now feels no relish for? It helps to cure worldly pride, teaching a man his own weakness; for he who before thought himself above his fellows, struck by the hand of God, remembers he is mortal by a feeling sentiment thereof, and sees the folly of all his late towering false ideas of things. Even the proud Antiochus remembered he was subject to God, and Agrippa forgot his pride feeling the stroke of sickness. Ah! while many sins proceed from health and prosperity, as Moses experienced in the Israelites (Deut. xxviii. 21, 22, 23), sickness preserves from them. Is it not a great mercy of God to draw those to himself by sickness, who might lose themselves and offend him by health? "A grievous disease makes a sober mind or soul."—Eccl. xxxi. 2.

3. It teaches the benefit of health, which, in its vigour, is little thought of, nor God duly thanked for. Such ungrateful persons justly learn to condemn and correct this fault, by feeling the pains and inconveniences of sickness, and to prize and make a better use of that blessing, if it be again restored to them.

It purifies the soul from all imperfections in her works or intentions. It is as a fire which separates the gold from copper, and silver from lead, *i. e.*, the good metal from the bad and from dross. It purges and cleanses away rust and filth, gives a distaste for the earth, and pure desires for heaven and of God alone; it heals and perfects the soul, that God may communicate himself to her with the greatest familiarity and effusion of graces.

4. Sickness is the great school of virtue and harvest of spiritual merit. It furnishes the greatest opportunities of patience, resignation, self-denial, charity, penance, &c. What quick progress in piety does not a soul make by the good use of sickness? Witness St. Lydwina, who by it was not only converted, but raised to the highest degree of sanctity. "Their infirmities were multiplied, afterwards they hastened."—Ps. xv. 3.

God by it extinguishes in the soul the love of the world, and furnishes her with occasions of satisfying for sin, of purchasing virtue and his everlasting crowns. She is spiritually sick through the inordinate love of creatures. How is she to be

cured? God applies this healing blister. "Like a physician he spares not, that he may spare; he is cruel out of pity and tenderness; nor does he consider the pain of the patient, but his health," as St. Jerome says in Ezech. You see the surgeon preparing his instruments; Oh, cruelty! but no; Oh, mercy! He does this to save, not to kill.

The soul is charged with heavy debts to the divine justice, which she is condemned to acquit either here by voluntary patience, or hereafter at a most severe rate. The merciful Judge exchanges her scorching flames and racks, surpassing all torments that can be imagined in this mortal life, for this passing sickness, to which he also annexes a crown. What a consolation to the suffering patient! He had not courage to undertake a severe course of penance, proportioned to his necessities; he spared himself and touched his sores too gently; God, the true loving physician, applies his own healing hand, and ministers a remedy proper to subdue and satisfy for all past sensuality and immortification.

Heaven is to be taken by violence and by sufferings. It is the inheritance of Christ crucified, and can be possessed only by the sons of Mount Calvary; by those who resemble that man of sorrows, whose mangled body had no place from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot free from its wound and pain. All the spiritual stones must be hewn and polished, before they can be fit for the building of that heavenly Jerusalem. A nobler destiny there requires a finer polish here. Our glory will be proportioned to our present sufferings. Not a torment, not the least portion of present suffering but what works an immense weight of glory to come. St. Romuald, afflicted with frequent violent distempers and pains, used to say: "The joys of heaven are so great, our suffering so small, and our lives so short, that we ought to die of shame, if we complain of any pains we can endure here for them."

5. By patience and resignation under sickness, we make the greatest and most meritorious sacrifice to God we are capable of. St. Chrysostom equals it to martyrdom (Hom. 3. in 1 Thes. t. 11, p. 447): "You have borne its pains with courage and constancy for the sake of Almighty God. This brings you the crown of martyrdom. Doubt not of this; for as a martyr suffers the pains of his torments rather than adore an idol, so do you bear the pains of your distemper; and if his tortures are more violent, yours are longer." What a glorious triumph is that of a Christian, resigned and cheerful for the love of God, under the sharpest pains! What trophies, what valour in the sight of God, of the gels, and all the saints, nay, and of the devils too!

6. The period of sickness is always a time for penance. This virtue must remove all sin, which is often the cause of the bodily disease, as is evident from the Holy Scriptures. "Very many distempers arise from the sins of the soul," says St. Chrysostom (Hom. 38. in Mat.); and Pope Innocent III., in the fourth General Council of Lateran, hence invites all sick persons to immediate repentance, because "the sickness of the body sometimes proceeds from the disease of the soul." Cap. cum Infirmitas de Pœnit. et Remiss. The first care, then, must be to recover the health of the soul.

Again, sin is the obstacle of grace; it is, therefore, to be carefully removed in the beginning of this holy time of our sanctification, that no part of its advantages and sufferings may be lost, but made a satisfaction for sin, and a progress in virtue. Moreover, every sickness is a visitation of God, to put us in mind of our mortality, and to summon us to prepare ourselves for death, as St. Gregory observes (Hom. 13. in Evang.) It is then of the highest importance to set about this immediate preparation, on the very first receiving of this summons, by setting about a diligent confession without delay; for, otherwise, it may be too late to do that great work, at least in a due manner; and, at best, some of this precious time will be lost. Pope Innocent III., in the fourth General Council of Lateran (cap. 13), commands, that all physicians admonish every patient, who is confined to his bed by any grievous sickness, immediately to call for his confessor; which, if he should not do, after the third day, to threaten to forsake him, unless his danger obliged the physician, by the law of nature, still to serve him. Pope Pius V. has enjoined this still more severely, and, in some countries, all graduates in physic swear to observe it. Though this law is not looked upon as everywhere in full force, yet it is at least what physicians ought to recommend, and what patients themselves ought to endeavour to practise. Barbosa, an eminent canonist, thinks this precept binding, even though the distemper be noways dangerous, if it confine the patient to his bed. Many pious men have made a general confession on such occasions.

7. It is not sufficient to begin the sickness with a good confession made as if for the end of a man's life. As it is a time of penance, the practice of this virtue must be continued, with the greatest fervour, during its whole course. Let the sick man's thoughts be chiefly occupied on the maladies of the soul; and let him be chiefly solicitous about them, offering up the blood of his Redeemer for their expiation, and praying most fervently, by frequent ejaculations, for a pardon. "Have mercy on me because I have

sinned."—Ps. vi. 2. "Heal me, O Lord! and I shall be healed." —Ps. lxxxvii. 3. Laying open all his spiritual miseries before the eyes of his heavenly physician, and never ceasing to implore his compassion and mercy. St. Augustine, in his sickness, repeated the penitential psalms with many tears, having had them written and hung round his bed for that purpose. Let the penitent repeat some of those psalms, or certain pathetic acts of contrition; and have often, in his heart and mouth, certain fervent ejaculations of repentance; as "Have mercy on me, O God! according to thy great mercy:" or, "Lord, be propitious to me a sinner." Particularly, let him beg pardon, by all the sacred wounds of Christ, and by his anguish and sorrows; often also imploring the intercession of the Mother of God, the refuge of sinners, and comfort of the afflicted: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and in the hour of our death." Be to us a true Esther, and a true Judith, in this our day of dangers and distress. Likewise invoking his other patrons, and all the angels and saints; happy themselves, but solicitous for us.

8. In this spirit of penance we must bear with patience, resignation, and joy, the pains and uneasiness of our sickness. We must consider the obligation and necessity of patience, its recompences, and innumerable happy advantages.

If we have before our eyes the torments of hell and purgatory, which we redeem by these present sufferings; or the incomprehensible joys of heaven, which we purchase by them; our greatest pains will appear as pleasures; we shall exult and triumph in spirit, insatiable in suffering all that God shall lay upon us, begging only, that he bestow on us holy patience, not to lose the advantages and crowns which he offers us.

We ought to have a crucifix always before our eyes, and meditate often affectionately on all the torments and anguish, which our divine Saviour endured for us, saluting often each of his adorable wounds, and begging, by them, patience and pardon of our sins. St. Francis of Sales, writing to a friend concerning sickness, said: "If I were tormented with a violent headach, I durst not pray to our Saviour to be delivered by the merits of his being crowned with thorns. For has he suffered so much for me, and shall I suffer nothing for myself, or to testify my love for him?" And one day he burst out into this exclamation: "If I knew that I had one string left in my heart, which was not marked with the crucifix, I would not keep it one moment."

We must unite our sufferings with those of our blessed Re-

deemer, in each of his sacred torments and wounds, and offer them to God in expiation of our sins, by each of our senses. What a happiness and glory is it to a Christian, to be able to suffer something with and for the love of our crucified Redeemer!

Those, who are tempted to impatience, must more particularly apply themselves, in their aspirations to God, to beg patience, and to consider, in short ejaculations, the above motives of patience; also, that all our pains are laid on us, by our loving Father and God, for our good; that he drank for us the bitter cup of his passion, &c. Let them repeat: "Lord, here cut, here burn, providing you but eternally spare me. It is just that my criminal senses and flesh should suffer."

9. Patience in sickness ought to be accompanied with an entire resignation of ourselves to the will of God. Under sharp pains we may pray, that God's mercy may temper and mitigate the rigour of his justice, and that he be pleased to abate our pains, if it be possible; yet, always closing our prayer with our divine Redeemer in the garden: "But not my will, but thine be done." He alone knows what is best for us: he is our Lord, and we are absolutely at his disposal. A creature has no more essential and indispensable obligation, than that of an entire submission to the will of his Creator. If, then, we pray for life or health, it must be with this clause; and our most earnest petition must be, that he grant us his holy grace and patience.

If, by our long sickness, we are a burden to others, and seem to be unprofitable to our family or friends, and that we do nothing to serve God or men; we must remember, that to have tired out others, and to be despised, or ill-served and assisted by them, is a great humiliation and suffering to us, and much for our spiritual good; our sickness is the will of God, and what is best for us, and most agreeable to him. If we bear it well, we shall draw down God's blessing upon our family, and all mankind, and shall sanctify ourselves more than we could by any other means whatsoever. St. Paul was two years in prison, when his young converts seemed to stand in need of him. If you are an artisan, and that a wife and children suffer by your sickness, God knows all that; let them also profit in the school of the cross, as it is God's will. If you cannot hear Mass, or join in the prayers of the Church, humble yourself as unworthy, and your fervent desire will procure you a share in them; in like manner, your suffering patiently is better than those spiritual exercises, which it debars you from. If you cannot serve your neighbour, corporally or spiritually, offer

up your sufferings for him; this will procure greater blessings, and it is more meritorious for you to suffer than to act. If all your pious designs miscarry, suffering is more acceptable to God than their success could be. The best science in a Christian is to know how to suffer; the greatest progress in virtue is made by suffering well. The children of light know, that nothing is more precious in a spiritual life, than to suffer for and with our God; and that to gather these sacred reliques of his cross is far more advantageous, than to possess those of the holy material wood, on which he suffered for us; as the former are the living copies of his adorable passion. See the example of Servulus, an eminent saint, by patience in sickness; St. Greg. Dial., l. 4, c. 14.

13. Let a man in sickness turn his whole heart and all his thoughts to God. The earth now forsakes him; riches, friends, dainties, even physicians, are now but feeble succours to him. Ought he not, then, to convert himself to him, who alone is able to relieve and truly comfort him? Let him never cease to beg of him, with all possible earnestness, the health of his soul. The pains and infirmities of his body, which he feels sensibly, ought to make him consider, in a more lively manner, the miseries and necessities of his soul, his better part, and recommend them to God's compassion and mercy.

Let him also commend to him the health of his body. Experience shows, that the greatest skill and most powerful remedies are, in most cases, very uncertain, and sometimes even hasten death, and check the most favourable dispositions of nature. His chief confidence, then, must be in God, and his blessing must be begged on the natural means employed. It was the reproach of Osee, King of Juda, that "in his sickness he sought not the Lord, but confided rather in the art of physicians."—2 Par. xvi. 2.

We are, however, bound in sickness to employ the ordinary and natural means of health. To neglect them would be to tempt God, by expecting his miraculous succour, when we had means in our hands; or, to be our own self-murderers, by throwing away our life, which we are not masters of, but which belongs to God. We are not bound to look for extraordinary means to preserve our life, *e. g.*, by remedies too expensive, or by a painful abscision of some members, though, to undergo such an operation for health, out of a good motive, is a part of virtue; but we are obliged not to neglect the ordinary means, such as the use of more simple remedies. The physician is the ordinary minister, by whose art God usually restores health. We read, that King Ezechias being

sick, and, having recourse to God, he sent his prophet Isaiah to him, who, applying dry figs to the abscess, in which his fever seemed to have terminated, restored him to his health. 4 Kings, xx. 7. Physic has no better poultice, to promote the suppuration of an abscess, than what the prophet was directed by God to use.* The Omnipotent could, by his only word, have healed the prince; but he chose to do it by those natural remedies, with which he has furnished us, to teach us they are his gifts, and that we ought not to neglect them. The advice of the Holy Ghost is, that we join prayer and physic. "Honour the physician for necessity, for the Most High created him. Because all medicine is from God."—Eccl. xxxviii. 1. 2. "Son, in thy sickness neglect not thyself: but pray the Lord, and he will cure thee."—Ib. v. 9. The apostle says (Ephes. v. 29): "No man hateth his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it;" viz., not to pamper it, but to employ it as the instrument of the soul in the service of God. That great example of mortification, St. Charles Borromeo, in his sickness, was most scrupulously careful to observe every tittle of his physician's orders, out of a principle of duty. St. Chrysostom was very careful and solicitous to procure medicines from Constantinople, in his sickness, during his banishment. Ep. 4, t. 3. St. Olympias, and his other friends, often sent him drugs at a great expense.

Alas! how few consider the great designs of mercy, which God forms upon them, when sick! At that time, men usually abandon themselves more to seek the satisfaction of senses, and to lose the spirit of mortification even amidst sufferings. Secondly, they are impatient under their pains, indulge in delicacies, and suffer themselves to be carried away by little impatiences against others; fretting at every service that is done to them, and at all that approach them. Thirdly, they are occupied on their body, and neglect to give attention to their souls, or to be employed on their interior.

11. It is a capital duty, from the very beginning of any grievous sickness, to commence seriously our immediate preparation for death, as if we knew it to be our last sickness, whereas, we neither know its day nor its hour. This distemper is certainly a visitation of God to put us in mind of our last end. It is, perhaps, that which will lay us in our grave. When it shall be grown too violent, how shall we then prepare ourselves for that critical great

* See Syn. Critic. ib. et Mead de Morbis Bibl. c. 5.

passage? We ought then to reflect, that God perhaps now says to us, as he did by his prophet to King Ezechias: "Set thy house in order, because thou shalt die, and shalt not live."—Isa. xxxviii. 1.

Nothing is more astonishing than the general folly of most men in putting off preparation for death, though they know it to be most certain, and its day and hour most uncertain, and yet that their eternal lot depends on that dreadful moment. Alas! their whole life ought to be a perpetual preparation for it and meditation thereon, as all the saints made theirs to be; yet many, even when put in mind of it by sickness, will defer to think seriously of it, because their distemper does not seem at first very dangerous or mortal. Such persons are often prevented by some sudden revolution in their body, loss of their senses, or sudden death: or at least do not set about the work till they are no longer in a condition for it. No floods of tears for an eternity can ever be able sufficiently to lament this most terrible misfortune of souls, and its everlasting consequences, the very dismal thought whereof fills us with too great horror to be stayed on or dwelt upon.

12 In the very beginning of any fit of sickness, which may prove serious, let a man not defer one moment to set his house in order, and begin his immediate preparation, as for death, by sincere repentance, and by settling his temporal concerns by a will duly made, if he have not one already made, as every good prudent Christian ought to have, to prevent any surprise: for they, who are unwilling to make their will whilst in health, are more so when sick, being loth to think of leaving what they cannot carry with them, or at least to own they are leaving it, which they foolishly imagine this act to be a sign of; nor do friends often care to suggest what they fear will be a disagreeable or melancholy proposal; thus such persons generally have this duty on their hands, when at the extremity. The making of a will is an obligation on all those who have temporal concerns to be put in order, not only that law-suits and all private bickerings may be prevented, the succession conveyed in its right channel, and what is due to every one secured in the easiest and safest natural way to them, &c., all which are duties of strict justice; moreover that services, which deserve a requital of gratitude, or of any other title, may not be unrewarded, nor reasonable charities or tokens neglected; for, though the obligation in these be not so rigorous as in justice, it is still binding, and in some cases not far inferior to that of justice. This attention every one owes to God, whose

steward he is in his temporal estate; to his family, which he is bound to support for the benefit of posterity; to his friends, for whom he ought to provide according to his abilities; and to himself, as it is by this means that he is to survive himself, and to perpetuate his services to God and his neighbour beyond his own grave, and, as much as in him lies, to the latest ages. A neglect herein is often a manifold transgression against justice to several, against piety towards his own, against legal right towards the commonwealth, of which every member and family are a necessary and useful branch, the more important, the greater its influence and authority in it are; a violation of all the other duties which he owes to mankind, and the cause of all the murmurs, detractions, animosities, and other evils, that ensue. They who have a will ready made, if anything is to be added or altered in it, may do this by a codicil. In the last will, it is a pious, Christian custom to insert a short, modest protestation of our faith and hope; but let nothing savour of vanity. It is the spirit of piety and of the Church, that the funeral should be ordered in a style of simple decency, without incurring needless pomp or expense. Temporal affairs ought to be settled, so that the sick man may more calmly apply himself totally to the care of his soul. Such friends, whose sight or discourse serve only to disturb or fill his mind with worldly thoughts, ought not to be admitted to him more than is absolutely necessary for decency, or comfort and charity. All who approach him ought to endeavour to assist him for the benefit of his soul, or at least to avoid whatever may hinder his attention to it.

Restitution for any injustice belongs to repentance. Let the penitent make it immediately himself, and not defer it one moment, much less leave it for his will, or to be done by an heir. If it be absolutely impossible that it should be done otherwise, let the heirs be compelled to execute it expeditiously, under the condition of some considerable loss or penalty, lest a thing so essential for his soul's rest should be so arranged as to admit delays.

If any public enmity with any one have taken place, it is necessary that the sick man should forgive the offence in a public manner before witnesses, and, if necessary, before a notary. In like manner, that he ask forgiveness of any whom he may have offended, and omit nothing to bring about a perfect reconciliation and sincere peace. But all these things are to be done secretly, if the cause have been secret, publicly if public, according to the nature of the circumstances. If he had injured another in his

reputation, he is bound to a reparation to the best of his power, by word of mouth, a testimony given in writing, or any other way possible. As these obligations are essentially indispensable, no pretences, exemptions, or delays whatsoever can be listened to.

After confession, whether general or otherwise, the sick person must make the repetition of acts of repentance his favourite exercise, as his chief preparation to go forth with confidence to meet his heavenly spouse. His other principal exercises must be made up of acts of resignation, patience, faith, hope, and charity, repeated in short ejaculations, or in such devout prayers or lectures as may not fatigue him, but suit his head and strength.

13. To exercise acts of resignation to death, we must offer ourselves to die at the time, in the manner, and with all the circumstances God pleases, making this debt of nature and punishment of sin a voluntary sacrifice of ourselves to our sovereign Lord, and a victim for the atonement of our past sins; remembering how Christ, our model, offered himself without reserve to drink the bitter cup of his passion, when he saw it presented to him by his Father. "He was offered, because he willed it himself."—Isa. liii. 7. No complaints, no murmurs, no opposition. If he once prayed that it might pass from him, if possible, it was with the most perfect, calm resignation to his heavenly Father's will, desiring only to be heard according to it. "As a sheep he shall be led to slaughter, and as a lamb be silent before him that shears it, and he shall not open his mouth."—Isa. liii. 7.

Christ vouchsafed, "through the grace of God, to taste death for all" (Heb. ii. 9), that he might take from it its sting and bitterness. How can it any longer seem bitter to us? Is it hard for us to taste it for him, and after him, nay, with him? Death is stript and disarmed, nay, swallowed up by the triumph of this Man-God over it. "Death is swallowed up in victory."—1 Cor. xv. 54. The apostle now insults it by a challenge, which has nothing of presumption: "O death! where is thy victory? O death! where is thy sting?"—Ib. 55. It has lost its sting by the virtue of the cross of Christ. It is the privilege of God's servants not to feel its affliction in dying. "The torment of death shall not touch them."—Wisd. iii. 1. Shall we by our fear renounce this rare privilege? Shall we, by a pusillanimity unworthy of faith, feel its torment, nay, anticipate and augment it? We die to go to our God, to enjoy him; shall we not with joy leave this earth to behold his glory, and to possess all his delights?

Who knows what evils a person might not be reserved to by a prolongation of life? Josias' falling in battle was a mercy in favour of his fidelity, as well as a light punishment: "For that thou hast heard the words of the volume, and thy heart is struck with fear, and thou art humble before the Lord; therefore, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy sepulchre in peace, that thy eyes may not see all the evils which I will bring upon this place."—4 Kings, xxii.

Elias had such evils in view, when he said: "It sufficeth me, Lord, take my soul."—3 Kings, xix.

14. We are to make frequent acts of offering our death to God, and accepting it cheerfully for his glory, and to obey his will. It is the greatest and most heroic act of one's life to lay it down for God. No one has greater love than this for a friend, as our Saviour declares. It is a pity, then, we should lose the merit and advantage of this oblation; by often repeating it, we shall work ourselves into the most fervorous sentiments of this total sacrifice of ourselves, and shall multiply it in the sight of God; therefore, daily in health, but especially in sickness, it will be an excellent devotion to offer our death to God as a sacrifice of obedience to his adorable will, and of acknowledgment of his sovereign dominion, to whom, as to the great master of life and death, we surrender it cheerfully the very instant he shall demand it, in union with that sacrifice of obedience, which Christ made in his sacred death. What a victory will this sincere act be over the inclinations of nature, to which death is terrible! Under which we shall say with Christ: "Not as I will, but as thou wilt."—Matt. xxvi. 39.

Secondly, we must offer it in the same act as a sacrifice of penance. Christ offered himself to death for the remission of sins; and we must offer our death to God, with his, for the expiation of our sins. It is a punishment inflicted on us for them, but by grace it may be made a satisfaction for them. Can the sentiments of perfect penitence employ any act more proper for its last consummation, than an annihilation of the body of sin, and a destruction of the very root of concupiscence, with all the instruments and occasions of its offences?

Thirdly, we must offer it as a sacrifice of love, as Christ died for love of us. At such a spectacle on Mount Calvary, we cannot but cry out: "What shall I render to the Lord for all the things which he has done for me?" Ah! I will, at least, joyfully resign to him, and for his holy will, my poor, wretched, criminal

life, begging of him to sanctify and make acceptable this my oblation, by uniting it with his. "I will receive the chalice of salvation."—Ps. cxv. By death we shall be made one in God: "For man shall not see me and live."—Exod. xxxiii. Ah! love must, then, embrace joyfully this invitation: "Let me not delay that I may see him."—St. Aug. Conf., l. 1, c. 5. By it, says the Lord, "I will show thee every good thing."

DISCOURSE LXVI.

ON THE VIATICUM AND EXTREME UNCTION.

1. It is a strict, divine, and ecclesiastical precept, that all adults, before death, receive the blessed Eucharist by way of spiritual viaticum. A neglect in this point is a grievous sin. Every one is obliged to receive it, "who is in a probable danger of death," whether from sickness, accident, or any violent cause whatsoever, provided it can be administered with reverence. Hence, malefactors, before execution, persons wounded to danger of their lives, and all who are by sickness in probable danger, are bound to receive it. The point of death, or when it certainly is at hand, is not to be waited for. A probable danger that death will follow suffices for this precept, and, in a doubt of the danger, the viaticum is to be given. The precept of receiving this sacrament fasting from midnight, does not regard it when administered as a viaticum. If a danger of death be foreseen, though not imminent, a person is bound to anticipate it by communicating before the danger; and this he may likewise not do fasting, if he cannot do it fasting. Hence, there is an obligation of communicating before a long, dangerous voyage, or a danger of madness, a long absence of a priest, or ordinarily before entering on certain medical prescriptions, under which, were any accident to happen, the patient could not receive. Under a fit of perpetual vomiting up what is taken, or under any other danger of irreverence, the sacrament cannot be given. If the patient cannot swallow the host, it may be moistened in a little wine or other liquid, and so given. Children, who have never yet received, if capable of discerning the body of the Lord, are necessarily to receive the viaticum. Though it be not given to persons entirely distracted or mad, yet, in a doubt whether

they have not some small use of reason, and there be no danger of any disrespect, especially if they have been devout towards the blessed sacrament, and so must retain the same sentiments now, though in part, perhaps, from mere habit, they ought not to be deprived of it. After having received the viaticum, the patient may still communicate, fasting as usual, and every day if it were proper. He may receive again, not fasting, and by way of viaticum, after six or seven days, if his danger still continue; for this is the term allowed by the most reasonable divines, and by the custom of most churches. Therefore, persons in sickness, or in the other circumstances above mentioned, are to be reminded to desire to receive the holy viaticum, and to prepare themselves for it with the greatest purity of soul, devotion, and fervour. The viaticum is not to be given with irreverence, as, *e. g.*, to scandalous sinners, unless they have repaired the scandals given. Hence, in Rome it is never administered to penitents, unless previously removed out of infamous houses. Persons wounded in a duel may receive it, providing they first publicly manifest their repentance. If the person be too sick and weak to remain fasting till the priest can bring him the holy communion, at a seasonable hour, so that it may be done with due reverence, he may and ought to receive it not fasting and by way of viaticum, though there be no danger of death at hand (see La Croix, &c.), which is confirmed by daily practice in Catholic countries, in giving the holy communion to infirm and old men at Easter, and in hospitals in many other cases.

Pope Martin V., in his Bull, Ineffabile Sacramentum, (t. 1. Bullar., p. 328), grants these indulgences: "We release of their enjoined penances, a hundred days to all those, who, when the body of our Lord is carried to communicate the sick, shall go before or follow it with a lighted torch; and to others, who shall devoutly follow it, fifty days." Other like indulgences have been granted for the same devotion, which the Roman Ritual orders the priest to announce on that occasion. Eugenius IV. doubled the above said indulgences, Excellentissimum Corporis, &c., Bullar., t. 1, p. 342.

2. The holy sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist is the compendium of all the mysteries, and the fruit of the sufferings of Christ; it contains the virtue of them all, and communicates their graces and effects to our souls. It is our spiritual food and nourishment; our complete viaticum or magazine of provisions; our strength and support during the course of our present pilgrimage, as its

type, the bread given to Elias, signified; of which we read: "And he walked in the strength of that food unto the mountain of God, Horeb."—3 Kings, xix.

It is our life, by which we are preserved from spiritual death; whence, our Saviour calls this sacrament so often our life, and the bread of life. "He that eateth me, the same shall live by me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Not as our fathers did eat manna, and are dead. He that eateth this bread shall live for ever."—John, vi. 58, 59. "He who eats life cannot die; for how shall he die, whose food life itself is?" says St. Ambrose, Serm. 18. in Ps. 118. Our bodies are become mortal by sin. Christ has restored them to immortality after his resurrection; and the Holy Eucharist, being his immortal flesh, is made the medicament or seed and principle of this gift in them. Hence, the Fathers style it the "pharmacopœia and seed of immortality," as it is called by St. Cyril of Alexandria, in c. 6, Joan, St. Irenæus, &c.

This sacrament, containing the plenitude of all graces, clothes us with the robe of sanctity, enriches our poverty, supplies our wants, and converts our weakness into strength and power. It is also our most powerful security and protection against our spiritual enemies, and particularly against the evils and terrors of death. Job prayed against the assaults of devouring enemies: "Deliver me, and place me by thyself; and let whosoever's hand fight against me."—Job, xvii. 3. With this he saw himself invincible. Here God does not set us by himself, but places himself in the midst of us, vouchsafes to cover us with himself as with a shield against all assailants, and renders us inaccessible to all the powers of hell and death. He becomes himself our escort, our guide, our light, and our way to eternity. But the principal effect of this adorable sacrament is, that in it Christ unites himself, nay, incorporates himself with us, that we may be made one in him, and remain in him, and he in us. "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him."—John, vi. 57. By this we bear his image in us, and are presented as such before the throne of God. In it we receive the most sacred pledge of that glory, which we hope; for as we see that he has already bestowed himself upon us, first, to be our redemption, and secondly, to be our food and nourishment, we have the most undoubted assurance put into our hands, that he will most certainly complete his promises, and again give himself to us to be our bliss. Nay, he here unites himself to us only to give us final perseverance, and a happy

consummation in his glory. Though the principal effects of the holy viaticum are to arm and prepare us for our great passage to the life of immortality, yet it often conduces to restore present corporal health, when this is conducive to God's honour, and expedient for our souls.

3. The effects of this divine sacrament show, that it has been instituted by Christ to be our spiritual support during the course of our whole pilgrimage here on earth, but most especially to be our great viaticum in the article of death. Hence, the Church, by the severest canons, commands her pastors to watch, that none of her penitent children, how grievous sinners soever they may have been, should depart this life without it, in which point she has corrected the severe discipline of certain private Churches. See the first General Council at Nice, St. Innocent I. Ep. 2. ad Exup., &c. Hence, the great solicitude in the times of persecution, that all should be armed with it. On which St. Cyprian writes: "He cannot be fit for martyrdom who is not armed by the Church to battle; and that soul faints, which the blessed Eucharist does not raise and inflame."* And again, Ep. 5: "We arm with the strength of divine food those whom we desire to be secure against the enemy."

As the Philistines, seeing the ark brought into the camp of the Jews, cried out in fear: "God is come into their camp; woe to us"—1 Kings, iv. 8; so this presence of Christ in the soul puts the devils to flight, as it is the most august mystery of the cross, by which they were vanquished. It sanctifies the soul, so that St. Chrysostom assures us (l. 6. de Sacerd., p. 424), that it was shown by a revelation to a great servant of God, that angels surround with respect the souls of those who, having devoutly received this sacrament, are ready to leave this world, because, of the body of Christ, which they have been partakers of, and that they wait to carry them to bliss. And in another place (Hom. 24. in 1 Cor.) he says: "If you depart this life strengthened by this divine food, you will ascend with great confidence to the

* "Idoneus esse non potest ad martyrium, qui ab ecclesia non armatur ad prælium; et mens deficit, quam non recepta eucharistia erigit et accendit."—S. Cyp. Ep. 54. ad Cornelium (ed. Pam. 57, ed. Oxon.) The same Father, when hid in the persecution, wrote (Ep. 5. ed. Pam. 57, ed. Oxon.) to the priests and deacons of his Church, to admonish them to be very solicitous to convey the holy Eucharist to the confessors and martyrs in prison. Upon which passage, Fell, the Protestant Bishop of Oxford, has this note: "Martyres id maxime satagebant, ut nunquam divino illo viatico carerent."

heavenly court, as if adorned with a most precious robe; for you carry with you the Lord of heaven himself, at whose sight the angels will attend you, and conduct you to his throne." On account of these particular and most important reasons it is easy to understand how grievous an enormity would be implied in a profanation of the viaticum, and what great devotion a person ought to bring to it, greater, if possible, than the preparation for an ordinary communion. Acts of faith, hope, and charity, reconciliation with enemies, pardon of injuries, &c. are to be made.

4. The motives of fear, humility, fervour, love, and desire of union with God are more pressing than on any other occasion, and ought to excite the most perfect dispositions for receiving the viaticum. The following aspirations, or such like, may be suggested.

I tremble at the sight of my miseries: I earnestly aspire to thee, my deliverer; but am overwhelmed with fear and confusion. I am scarcely able to think, much less to prepare myself to approach thee, dread God of majesty and sanctity, having nothing to supply my incapacity but thy infinite mercy and grace. Do thou dispose me to so great a work, that I may receive thee not to my condemnation, the very thought whereof overwhelms me with fear, but to mercy and salvation; cleanse, inflame, and adorn my miserable soul for this purpose.

I am covered with sin as with an universal leprosy; I was conceived in its filth: all my faculties, members, and senses; all my life, almost all my past actions and thoughts are defiled by it: I am a real monster of baseness and ingratitude. Father of mercies, look on me with compassion; deliver me from all my evils; cleanse me perfectly from all my stains; touch my heart with true Christian compunction, and wash it in the laver of thy precious blood, that being made pure I may be able to stand in thy sight, and not convert thy Holy of Holies into my most terrible judgment. Thou art infinite sanctity and purity, and nothing of sin can appear before thee. Purify my soul, that I may not be struck by thee for my rashness in presuming to approach thee.

I know and most firmly believe, that in this sacrament I receive thy sacred body and blood, and lodge thee, true God, in thy dread divinity and majesty, in my poor soul. The stars of heaven, thy angels themselves, were not pure in thy sight; and how do I presume so high as to dare to receive thee into my breast? Thou thyself hast been pleased to institute this wonderful sacrament out of compassion for my miseries, that thou might-

est heal them by so sovereign a remedy. Thou invitest me to it, and, if I refuse or excuse myself, threatenest me that I shall not have any part with thee in thy kingdom, nor be admitted unto thy nuptial feast. Can one sick refuse a sure means of health offered to him? Can extreme misery and poverty fly from relief? Can a criminal reject the gracious tender of pardon and favour? No; the sight of my own grievous calamities no less urges me to thy sovereign banquet than thy unspeakable goodness. I humbly beg that thy mercy suffer me not to abuse so great a deliverance to my more terrible undoing.

I likewise behold in myself all weakness, yet surrounded with external evils and dangers, and with strong and cruel enemies, studying with indefatigable malice to devour me. "The sorrows of death have encompassed me; the torments of iniquity have disturbed me; the sorrows of hell have surrounded me, and the snares of death have seized on me."—Ps. xvii. 5, 6.

Sin, hell, the devil, and the jaws of death are what I fear being overtaken by. All these evils stand around and press in close upon me. Where shall I find a refuge? To whom shall I fly for protection? To thee only, my God and all-powerful Saviour, and that in this thy holy sacrament. I arise, therefore, blessing for ever thy infinite goodness, and with a firm confidence in thy mercy, power, and strength approach to cover myself therewith. Despise not my cries, O my God! from the depths of my evils and dangers. In thee I trust and shall not be confounded. "Thou hast prepared in thy sight a table against those that afflict me."—Ps. xxii. 6. "Though I shall walk in the midst of the shades of death, I shall not fear evils, because thou art with me."—Ib. 4.

I am a poor worm of the earth, and a most miserable sinner; nevertheless thou, O infinite Lord! rich in glory, grace, and all good things, commandest me to call thee Father: thou art my Creator, Redeemer, and most loving spouse. I am stamped with thy divine image, bought and washed from sin with thy sacred blood, sanctified and made precious in thine eyes by thy mercy and grace, and framed to love and enjoy thee. Thou art my beginning and end; my centre and my all. My sins have caused a division between me and thee. Oh! how do I abhor and detest them! how do I grieve and weep, that I should have been so base and ungrateful as ever to have offended thee, and wounded my immortal soul! From my heart I grieve for and detest all my sins, resolved, by thy grace, never more to offend thee. In-

crease this my sorrow and compunction; and by thy mercy and the bath of thy precious blood, efface in me all the stains of my guilt, and remove entirely the obstacles to thy grace and to the union of my soul with thee.

Behold the languishing desires of my heart to thee, and visit, sanctify, adorn, comfort, and strengthen it. Kindle in it the fire of thy holy love, and extinguish in it all affection for creatures, that I may be able to say, I am all thine, and may deserve to receive thee with the plenitude of thy graces in this thy holy sacrament; that henceforth and for ever I may always abide in thee, and thou in me; that I may ever remain united to thee by the band of an invincible love, in which nothing may ever separate me from thee.

Fervent aspirations must be repeated, without violence, in profound sentiments of humility, compunction, and divine love; *e. g.*, "As the hart desireth," &c., or, Come, sweetest, come; relieve my poverty and miseries; unite me to thyself; incorporate me in thee. In this my dreadful journey I want a guide and advocate to support and comfort me, to be all to me.

The viaticum must be received with the warmest affections and the most profound respect and devotion. The Duke De Mercœur, returning crowned with laurels from his glorious victories over the Turks, and falling sick at Nuremberg, a Lutheran city in Germany, where the magistrates refused to suffer the blessed sacrament to be carried to him, ordered himself to be removed to the next Catholic village. The Protestants, out of pity, to prevent this, granted his request. Seeing the holy Eucharist brought into his chamber, he arose, prostrated himself on the floor, and having most devoutly received it, sweetly expired in that posture immediately after.

5. After receiving the holy viaticum, the soul must entertain herself in praise, love, and acts of oblation, sacrifice, and petition. "I adore thee, my God, present in my breast; all ye heavenly spirits, behold here the throne of your God; attend and praise him for ever. I most humbly bow down all the powers of my soul to you, O dread Lord! and thank you with all my affections for this unspeakable condescension, and for all your infinite mercies to me. May the angels never cease for all eternity to praise and thank you with me for it. Now, O Lord! dost thou dismiss thy servant, according to thy word, in peace. O the sweet love of my heart, and my all! I now hold you, and will no more dismiss you, by your holy grace, which I most earnestly crave. I

with joy henceforth renounce the world, and all the things which are of the world. May I say sincerely and in truth, with your apostle: 'I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me.' I now possess thee under the veil of this sacrament; grant that I may after death be united to thee in thy glory, and behold thee no longer in type and figure, but face to face. I desire to be dissolved and to be with thee; for to live is Christ to me, and to die a gain. Impart thy benediction to all thy servants, particularly those under my care, or for whom I ought in particular to pray; to thy whole Church, and to all mankind. May thy holy name be known, honoured, and loved over the whole world; may thy sacred love reign in every heart. Give my poor soul thy blessing, with all thy precious gifts and graces; make me breathe and live only to thee, and remain always thine alone; cleanse and sanctify me more and more, and call me to thyself in peace. Into thy hands I commend my spirit. Lord Jesus, receive my soul. Holy mother of God, my guardian angel, my devout patrons, and all the blessed angels and saints, become earnest intercessors for me." Cardinal Hosius, who had been the Pope's Legate at the opening of the Council of Trent, having received the viaticum, said: "Stay with us, O Lord! because it is towards evening, and the day is now far spent"—Luke, xxiv. 29; with which words he devoutly expired.

6. Besides the viaticum, Christ was pleased to institute a special sacrament, commonly called Extreme Unction, or the last anointing, to wipe away the remains of sin, and prepare us for our great passage to eternity; of which St. James writes thus, v. 14, 15: "Is any man sick among you? let him bring in the priests of his Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man; and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him." Here occurs every proper character of a true sacrament of the New Law. First, a visible sign, viz., the anointing of the sick man, and the prayer of faith. Secondly, the promise of grace conferred by it, viz., the raising up of the sick man, and the remission of sins; viz., in his soul. Thirdly, it is not mentioned as a temporary rite, but as a permanent, perpetual ordinance, as appears from those words: "Is any one sick among you?" nor can it be doubted that Christ was the institutor; otherwise, the apostle would never have mentioned it in such absolute terms as a thing ordained; nor could he have annexed the promise of grace to it, which is as explicit and formal as in the

institution of baptism. St. James cannot be understood chiefly of a miraculous restoring of bodily health; the gift of miracles was not perpetual, as this promise is; nor does he order the prophets or performers of miracles, but the priest to be called in, and the raising up of the sick man is principally relative to his soul, as it is an absolute promise, which cannot be understood of the body; otherwise no Christian would have died. And had it been relative merely to the state of the body, it should also have included the blind, deaf, and crippled, who were the great objects of the gift of miracles in the apostolic age. The sacred text is indeed clear enough of itself; but the tradition of the Church gives to it the highest degree of evidence. The anointing of the sick practised by the Jews no more agreed with this than their ablutions did with baptism. That was used in the slightest disorders, and as a natural remedy; this regards persons dangerously ill, according to the original Greek word *ασθενειν*, as Selden proves, l. 2. de Syn. c. 7, n. 11 and 12. That practice was accidental; this ordered, and for a different end, viz., against temptations, and to remit sins.

We read (Mark, vi. 13), that the apostles "anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them." This miraculous gift was a gradual preparation towards the dignity to which Christ afterwards raised this unction, establishing it a perpetual holy rite in his Church. Origen refers not this to the gift of miracles, but ranks it amongst the ways of remission of sin, quoting for it the passage of St. James; Hom. 2. in Lev. Pope Innocent I., whose learning and sanctity were so highly celebrated by St. Ambrose, St. Austin, &c., in his epistle to Decentius, Bishop of Eugubio, a decretal in every age held in the greatest esteem by the Church, mentions this unction of the sick by priests, according to St. James, as a perpetual and universal divine law and holy sacrament, and declares, first, that a bishop has authority to administer it, as well as simple priests, as he is more than a priest, and this oil can be consecrated only by the bishop; secondly, he pronounces that penitents cannot receive it, viz., before their absolution, because they are excluded from all sacraments, consequently from this. "To whom the other sacraments are denied, how can one kind be granted?"*

The matter of this sacrament is oil of olives, without any mix-

* Quibus reliqua sacramenta negantur, quomodo unum genus putatur posse concedi?

ture; it is necessary, and, according to St. Thomas, essential, that it has been blessed by a bishop. The organs of the five senses, the chief instruments of our sins, are all to be necessarily anointed. To these is added, not of necessity for the sacrament, the anointing of the feet, and, in some places, of the loins in men. If an organ of some sense be lost, the next part is to be anointed for it. The form is the prayer of faith, by which the priest begs God's mercy and pardon for the person's sins, whilst he anoints him. All who have ever enjoyed the use of reason, and consequently, may have ever committed actual sin, may, and are bound to receive this sacrament, when they are in danger of death by sickness; consequently children, of whom we doubt whether they have attained the use of reason or not, though they have never received the sacrament of penance, or the holy communion; also persons now mad, or out of their senses, if they have not always been so; likewise, persons dying of wounds, though received in a duel, if now penitent; or dying of poison, because they are sick; but not soldiers before fighting, notwithstanding the great danger of death, nor malefactors before execution; because they are not sick. This sacrament ought not to be deferred to the last, but should be given, if possible, while the patient, in the enjoyment of his reason, can prepare himself to receive it with more fruit; and whilst bodily health may be more easily recovered, if conducive to God's honour. Though the distemper should be very long, yet, if it seem mortal, this sacrament may be given in the beginning of it; and ought to be so, if the distemper be of a treacherous kind, and death may ensue without much forewarning, as in the bad sorts of malignant small-pox. It cannot be received twice during the same distemper: or rather during the same state of distemper: for, if a person seem better, though not recovered, and becomes worse again, he may again be anointed; which may commonly be done after about fifteen days' interval. In a doubt, it is more conformable to the ancient discipline to reiterate it, and more advisable.*

7. The effects of this sacrament are, first, the increase of sanctifying grace, as in all sacraments. Secondly, the pardon of venial sins, and the remission of the punishment due to them, in proportion to the receiver's dispositions; sometimes, by accident, also of mortal sin, which the penitent could not confess; for the apostle attributes to it the remission of sin, if the patient lie under it.

* Van Espen, de E. U. n. 39.

Thirdly, it is the consummation of penance and the perfect healing of sin, the remains whereof it wipes away, abating the propensity to evil left by sin, the sloth for virtue, and the weakness of the mind, in raising itself to heavenly things. This St. James means by those words: "The Lord shall raise him up." It also conduces to restore bodily health, if this be for the spiritual benefit of the soul.

Fourthly, it procures special grace and spiritual courage, to bear patiently the pains of the distemper, strength against temptations, and succours against the last and most vigorous assaults of Satan, and the dangers and alarms of death. The enemy is never more violent in his attacks on the poor soul, knowing the importance of her last moments, and that he has but little time; and man, of himself, is never less able to resist him, and raise himself to God; insomuch, that experience shows a man is then scarcely able to think seriously on heaven. It is, therefore, a particular goodness of our divine Redeemer, that he has been pleased to support and strengthen us by such a powerful sovereign medicine, adapted to all the pressing necessities of that critical time, as the Council of Trent elegantly explains (Sess. 7, c. 2); adding, "That a neglect of so great a sacrament cannot be without a grievous crime and injury of the Holy Ghost whether in the pastor or penitent." St. Charles Borromeo relates, to this purpose (Conc. Med. 5), the example of St. Malachy, who attributed to his own negligence the misfortune of a woman, who died without having received it, and spent the whole night in prayers and floods of tears, with which he bathed the corpse. But, in the morning, our Lord heard the saint, so that she returned again to life, as if awaking from a profound sleep, and, sitting up in her bed, received this sacrament from his hands, and afterwards recovered her health.

We see from the life of St. Malachy, written by St. Bernard, and from some rituals and canons (as, cap. ab Infirmis, 26, c. 7), that, in some churches, extreme unction was given immediately after penance, of which it is the complement, and before the viaticum; which custom is now observed in the diocese of Paris; but, the foolish delays of many, not willing to receive a sacrament, which they rashly look on as the forerunner of death, till at the last extremity, moved the chief pastors, in most places, to order the viaticum to be given first, lest persons, so delaying, might be reduced to such a state, as to become incapable of receiving it, as Bellarmine observes, l. de Arte Moriendi, c. 7.

They are guilty of a mortal sin, who defer this sacrament so as to run the risk of losing it; *e. g.*, foolishly persuading themselves that it is a sign of death; also, they who encourage such illusions or delays, or who do not advertise the sick in time to receive it, especially if they be pastors or physicians; nor is the fear of alarming the patient an excuse, though prudent care must be taken to prevent such a foolish alarm.

8. As to the ceremonies with which this sacrament is administered, its matter aptly signifies its effects. Firstly, the remission of sin and the restoration of the spiritual vigour of the soul, by its healing quality. Secondly, its fortifying the soul for her last conflict, is represented by its property of a strengthener of the limbs, and making them supple; for which reason, the ancient wrestlers were anointed before combat. Unction is used in baptism and confirmation, to admonish us, that we are then enlisted soldiers, to fight the battles of the Lord. It is employed here again, to put us in mind, that, as we began, so we must consummate our career, by fighting manfully and perseveringly to the end. This is called the last, or extreme unction, because used in three other sacraments prior to this, viz., baptism, confirmation, and order; and likewise, because it is commonly the last administered of the sacraments, whence, the Greeks place it the last in order.

The sign of the cross represents the source whence this holy sacrament draws all its virtue; in the same manner as it does, and is therefore used, in the celebration and administration of every other sacrament. It is likewise employed to be a terror to the infernal fiend, who is put to flight at the sight of that glorious instrument, by which he was vanquished, and man rescued out of his devouring jaws. At what time do we stand more in need of being armed with this holy sign Thau, as the mark of our salvation, and the standard of our God, than in our last dreadful passage, when the devils are surrounding us, and the gates of eternity are, as it were, opened before our eyes to receive us?

The rest of these ceremonies consist in prayers. Extreme unction is administered with more prayers than the other sacraments. Its effect is owing to prayer, which constitutes the sacrament, together with the unction or matter which it accompanies. Likewise, longer prayers make up the preparation. Among the Greeks, seven priests join in prayer in administering it. The by-standers also add their private devotions for the sick man; the reason of this is, the present necessities of his soul, and his weakness to pray in a manner proportioned to them; therefore, the

Church, by her ministers, and all the faithful, come in to his assistance.

9. The penitent will receive a larger share of graces, by this sacrament, in proportion to the greater devotion and more perfect dispositions with which he prepares himself for it. Though extreme unction should be administered immediately after the viaticum, yet some short distinct preparation is required, as it is a distinct sacrament. Besides acts of faith, hope, love of God, and our neighbour, in particular, of pardon of all who have injured us, and begging pardon of all we may have injured or offended, with a sincere desire of making all due satisfaction; this preparation consists in the most perfect acts and prayers of repentance, as this sacrament is a supplement to that of penance, and is therefore ranked by Origen, St. Chrysostom, St. Augustine, &c., amongst the proper means of penance and pardon of sin, which Christ has left to his Church. It is the last perfect purifier of the soul, but this it performs only in proportion to the sincerity of her compunction. Hence, the prayers with which the Church administers it are in the penitential spirit, to beg pardon of the patient's sins, and to deliver him from his spiritual infirmities, wounds, and sorrows, of which each of these prayers speaks. The litanies are added, to engage the blessed in heaven, who make but one elect body with us, to assist us with their suffrages, that, assisted by the Church triumphant, we may resist the powers of hell. The latter part of the litanies consists of the three sorts of petition, mentioned by St. Paul (1 Tim. ii. 1), deprecations, to be delivered from all evil; entreaties, conjuring God to show mercy, by his cross and other mysteries; and prayers or petitions that he may spare us. As the remission of sin, the victory over death, and all the fruit of the sacraments, are from the virtue of Christ's death and passion, it is through it, in a particular manner, that these prayers are to be presented to God. The penitent may then prepare himself for this sacrament, by answering in his heart to these prayers, which the priest recites, not as private devotions, but as public, in the name of the Church, and, consequently, with greater efficacy; or he must, in the mean time, draw ejaculations of compunction from Christ's sufferings, from the penitential psalms, or the like; and, remembering that Christ, in his agony, would be visited and comforted by an angel, let him earnestly beg that he himself visit, comfort, and strengthen him.

10. Whilst he is receiving the sacrament, as every sense is anointed that each instrument of sin may be cleansed, and each

organ, which had been depraved by sin, may be reformed and sanctified, the penitent ought, in the most fervent compunction of his soul, to beg, by the wounds and blood of Jesus, that all his sins committed by every sense and faculty, in commission or omission, be entirely blotted out, offering up the sufferings and merits of Christ in satisfaction for them, and praying that all his senses and powers be consecrated pure to God alone for evermore, as in this form, at the eyes: "Sweet Jesus! by thy most tender mercy, and by thy sacred wounds and blood, pardon me all the innumerable sins I have ever committed by my sight. I most heartily detest and bewail them; consecrate my eyes henceforth entirely to thyself." And so of the other senses.

11. After receiving extreme unction, let the penitent cry out from his heart: Praised for ever be thy holy name, O God! for this and all thy unspeakable mercies. Grant to my soul the full effects of this holy sacrament; its abundant graces; true patience to support all inward trouble, or exterior pains under sickness; strength to resist all temptations; an entire pardon of all my offences, and courage and final perseverance in thy love. If my health be expedient for thy glory, let this be the means to restore it; if it be for my spiritual good, and thy divine honour, that I now pay the tribute of nature, I cheerfully submit myself to thy holy ordinance; but earnestly beg that thou call me hence in mercy, and unite me to thyself. O sweet Jesus! by thy precious death, forsake me not in this time of my distress, but defend me from evil, and now prepare my soul for thyself, and admit me into the number of thy blessed.

DISCOURSE LXVII.

ON THE VIRTUES AND TEMPTATIONS UNDER THE LAST SICKNESS.

1. Under sickness, especially if it be dangerous, a person ought to have so settled his temporal concerns, as to be under no necessity of giving his thoughts or precious time to them; but to employ them on spiritual things by short prayers, which he may often repeat in his heart, or get suggested to him by others, yet without importunity or tediousness, or so as to fatigue his head or spirits; which will require not only great intervals of rest, but likewise some grave relaxation; such, however, as may not

distract his mind from God. To help his attention, it is good to have a crucifix, or picture of our Saviour in his agony or on the cross, or of the penitent Magdalen, so placed that he may cast his eyes upon it. This means will help him often to excite himself to God by short aspirations, with greater ease, in his weak condition, in which he is, perhaps, scarcely able to think without some such assistance. Acts of the three theological virtues, of patience, resignation, sacrifice, and penance, must be his principal entertainment. To facilitate the exercise of them to him, another may sometimes propose them to him as short as possible; to which he may answer Amen, at least in his heart; or repeat them to himself, by only pronouncing the holy name Jesus to himself, in his heart, with compunction, love, confidence, and resignation.

These acts may be formed by way of petition; *e. g.*: Teach me, O God! to believe in thee one God in three co-eternal persons; in Christ, my Redeemer, the second person of this adorable Trinity; and in all thy truths, because thou, O eternal truth! hast revealed them. Teach me to hope in thee, whose infinite power and goodness cannot forsake one who trusts in thee. Teach me to love thee with my whole heart, O sovereign goodness! to detest and grieve for all my sins, because by them I offended thee; to forgive all who have injured me, as I beg thou wilt forgive me my grievous treasons against thee; and to love all for thy sake; to offer thee my heart as an entire sacrifice in life and in death, to thy holy will in all things.

2. Acts of prayer may be formed thus:

O God of pity and mercy! look down on my weakness and miseries, and be moved to compassion. The sight of miserable objects, whilst on earth, moved thy bowels of tenderness. Let now the sight of my poverty, weakness, sufferings, and incapacity to do anything for myself awaken thy paternal goodness over me.

All friends on earth are unable to relieve or comfort me; the world forsakes me in my distress. Thou alone art my true and only friend, O my God and my all! to thee I fly with my whole heart. Cast me not from thee.

Loving Redeemer, when it was told thee: "Behold! Lazarus, whom thou lovest, is sick;" thy tenderness was moved, and thou would immediately go to visit him. Thou lovest me, O Father of souls! for I am thy work, stamped with thy image and written in thy hand. Behold then in me, though so base a wretch, him thou lovest now sick; make haste to visit me.

I groan under the weight of my manifold temporal and spiritual miseries; but thy presence would heal them all. Visit me, O God! my powerful deliverer.

3. Acts of faith must be explicit on the Trinity and Incarnation at least, and may be made by reciting the Apostles' Creed, or thus: I firmly believe one God in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and that God the Son was made man, and died on an ignominious cross. I believe all that this God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived, has taught me by his holy Catholic Church, which he instructs and guides in all truth, by his unerring Spirit, to the end of the world. I am resolved, by his grace, to live and die in this faith, and an obedient child of this his holy Church. His word can never deceive me.

These acts may be made by way of prayer, petition, or oblation; as thus: I commend myself to thee, O holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! who, three persons in the same undivided divine nature, art only one true God. I commend myself to thee, O almighty Father! who createdst me, the heavens, the earth, and all things visible and invisible, out of nothing. I commend myself to thee, O Lord Jesus Christ! who for men and for our salvation wouldst vouchsafe to be made man, to be born of the ever Virgin Mary, ever remaining a pure virgin, to suffer, die on an ignominious cross, rise again and ascend into heaven, whence thou wilt come at the last day to judge all men, who wilt raise them from the dust, the just to eternal bliss, the wicked to eternal torments. I commend myself to thee, O Holy Ghost! who proceedest from the Father and the Son. I adore and glorify you, one God. I promise obedience to thy holy Church, established by thee to the end of the world, and the depository of thy holy truth and sacraments.

This act may be made by way of oblation, as, "I offer myself to thee, O Holy Trinity, Father!" &c.

Or, of thanksgiving, as, "I thank and praise, O Holy Trinity, Father!" &c.

Sometimes in a short manner: "O Lord! I believe; aid the weakness of my faith."

4. Acts of hope may be excited in the following manner: My sins provoke thy justice, O God! but thy goodness still desires to save me. Thou lovest me as a workman loves the work of his hands, or a father his son, whose good and happiness he desires more than the son himself can do. I cannot desire my own salvation so earnestly as thou dost. It was for this that thou createdst

me out of nothing; for this thy only co-eternal Son died on a cross to redeem me; for this thou hast enriched me with so many graces, and hast established so many means of grace to conduct me to thy glory.

Acts of hope may be suggested from the passion of Christ, and from ejaculations drawn from holy Scripture.

Father, who, to redeem thy slave, deliveredst up thy Son, have mercy on me.

"In thee, O Lord! have I hoped; I shall not be confounded for ever."

"Why art thou sad, O my soul! and why dost thou disturb me? Hope in God, because still will I confess to him, the salvation of my countenance and my God."—Ps. xlii.

Thou, O Lord! hast said: "I am the resurrection and the life, and he who believeth in me, although he be dead, shall live: and he who liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die."—John, xii.

"I considered the Lord as always present; because he is at my right hand, lest I be moved."—Ps. xv.

"I am thine: O save me!"

"Mercy shall surround him, who hopeth in the Lord."

Thou, O Lord! art my hope, whatever is to be done or suffered.

5. Penance and contrition are to be the most familiar exercise of all persons under sickness, entirely to wipe away all obstacles to God's favour and mercy. To excite this holy compunction, short reflections may be suggested on the infinite majesty of God, his hatred of sin in the angels, &c., his goodness, benefits, and love; especially the passion of Christ; the evils of sin, &c., as by saying: How could I offend and insult my loving great God, my heavenly Father, before whom the angels tremble; him who created me to his own image, &c.; him who loved me from eternity with an infinite love, and delivered his only Son for me to a most cruel and ignominious death? &c.

By your precious blood wash away all my stains and sins; by it supply the imperfections of my actions. Turn thy face, O God! from my sins, and look upon the face of thy Son. Accept his sacrifice for the cancelling of all my debts and offences.

You left your ninety-nine sheep to seek the one that was astray. Behold I am thy lost sheep. Take me upon thy shoulders, and restore me to thy pasture.

I am that unfortunate man, left wounded and destitute on the highway from Jericho to Jerusalem. Heal my wounds, O pious Samaritan! O only physician of my poor soul!

Heaven rejoiced, and you made a festival of triumph on the return of your prodigal son. I am that ungrateful wretch; O blessed Father! receive me again into that household, bathed in tears at the sight of thy goodness and my misery.

"Enter not into judgment with thy servant, because no living creature shall be justified in thy sight."—Ps. cxlii. "Have mercy on me, O God! according to thy great mercy; and according to the multitude of thy mercies, blot out my iniquities. Still wash me, O Lord! from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin."—Ps. l.

"Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee. I am not now worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hirelings."—Luke, xv. 19.

My debts are immense. I am affrighted at the sight and consideration of thy justice. But how can I despair? My Jesus has paid for them an infinite price. "The tribulations of my heart are multiplied; extricate me from my necessities." I renounce thee, Satan; and adhere to thee, O Christ!

Care must be taken that perfect restitution be made for all the injustices, detraction, &c., and satisfaction and reparation for all injuries done to others.

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us. For thy sake, O God! do I, from my heart, perfectly forgive all. Arise according to thy word, and forgive my immense debt to thee.

St. Augustine, in his last sickness, caused select verses out of the penitential Psalms to be written and hung all around his bed, more easily to excite his attention in that weak state, saying that no one, even the most innocent, ought to die without penance. It was long the custom of religious and devout persons to receive the last sacrament, and to die, laid on hair-cloth and ashes strewed on the floor, as an emblem of the penance in which they died, as St. Charles observes, in his ritual of Milan. St. Martin, after a most innocent and holy life, would die so, saying: "It behoveth a Christian to die in sackcloth and ashes; and I sin, if I leave you a different example." The holy monks of La Trappe kiss the hair-cloth and ashes in a spirit of compunction, when they are laid on it.

6. As to acts of the holy love of God, let them be most frequent. Affections and aspirations are to be formed, from his infinite goodness and perfections; from his eternal infinite love for us; his benefits of nature in creating, preserving, protecting us, command-

ing his angels to guard us, &c.; of grace, and our redemption, and sanctification; and of the glory which he has prepared for us.

Give me, O God! thy holy love above all things, and with my whole heart. I ask nothing else. In this I have all things. Who will give me, that I may love thee as I ought? When wilt thou fill my whole heart? When shall I be all thine? Oh! make me so this moment, my God. I rejoice in thy infinite happiness and perfections, O God! Everything is vile to me, who have found thee. Grant that I may find thee, and trample on everything but thee.

"Hallowed be thy name, thy will be done in heaven and on earth."

"My God, and my all. What have I in the heavens, and besides thee what have I wished on earth? Thou art the God of my heart, and my inheritance for ever. O God, my God! from the rising sun do I watch thee. As the hart panteth, &c. Who will deliver me from this body of death? Lead out my soul from prison, to confess with thy angels unto thy name."

Who will grant that my soul, created by thee, may return to its origin? Good Jesus, when shall I appear before thee? Oh! when shall I be with thee, in thy kingdom? Oh! that I had lived and breathed with your holy love alone; O God! grant that my life's last breath may be consumed in your love.

7. Acts of resignation, and against the fear of death, must not be omitted. It is a dangerous flattery in friends, to give a sick man too great hopes of life; yet, he must be sweetly prepared to submit to death, and resign himself to it in a spirit of sacrifice. In short, and without dwelling long on this subject, this disposition will be worked up in him, by proposing mildly and tenderly the indispensable necessity of death in all; the miseries and dangers of this life; the glory of heaven, and the expectation of the blessed waiting for us; that death is but the passage to bliss; that God is our good and loving Father, desiring our salvation, knowing best the time, &c. to call us hence. One true act of his love, and of contrition, will remove all that we can fear in death, viz., sin.

"I have rejoiced in the things which have been said unto me; we will go into the house of the Lord."—Ps. cxxi.

If he pray for health, let him always add from his heart: "However, let not my will, but thine, be done. As is the will of heaven, so let it be done. Yes, Father, because such is thy

pleasure. Christ is my life, and death a gain. I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ."

Whether I live or die, O Lord! may I live and die only to thee. "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and on the last day I shall arise from the earth, and shall again be clothed with my flesh, and in it I shall see God, whom I myself am to see and no other."—Job, xix.

I thank you, with all the affections of my soul, my God, that you did not call me out of this world in my sins. Grant me now true penance. I offer thy Christ for the expiation and propitiation of my offences. I accept death in satisfaction and in obedience to thy holy sweet ordinance.

"When shall I come and appear before the face of God? Lord, I have loved the beauty of thy house, and the place of residence of thy glory. One thing I have asked of thee, this I will require; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

Under violent pains: "Here burn, here cut, nor spare me here, that thou mayest eternally spare me; however, I beg that thy mercy may temper thy justice."*

8. The sign of the cross, or the presence of a crucifix, excites devotion to the sacred passion of Christ, and is a terror to the devil, and a sign of confidence to the soul; "In this sign thou shalt conquer." The sick man ought to excite himself to all virtues, principally by entertaining himself on Christ crucified; to faith, adoration, and love, saying: "I believe that thou art the Son of the living God, who camest into this world to save sinners, of whom I am the greatest; save me. We adore thee, we bless thee, Christ. Seeking me, thou didst sit down tired. Thou hast redeemed me by thy cross, let not such sufferings prove vain. Just avenging Judge, pardon our sins, before the great avenging day."

"Behold the wood of the cross, the ensign of the great king; flee, ye infernal powers, the lion of the tribe of Juda has conquered."† Remember, O Jesus! what I cost thee; remember thy bloody agony, &c.; let not thy pains, tears, and blood be lost for me.

The patient may often adore each wound apart, and beg by

* Hic ure, hic seca, hic non parcas, modo in æternum parcas. Verumtamen justitiam tuam paterna misericordia temperet, rogo.

† Ecce signum crucis, signum magni regis; fugite partes adversæ: vicit Leo de tribu Juda.

each patience, pardon, and mercy; as, by his sacred head, pierced with thorns; by his adorable hands, bored with nails, &c.; begging to be bathed in his precious blood, and to be sheltered in his wounds from dangers and enemies. Looking on the crucifix, let him say: O Christ! thou wert lifted up on the cross, as the serpent in the desert, that all looking on you might be healed. Heal me, O blessed Redeemer! You were hung on the cross to draw all to you. Draw my heart to yourself by sweet love.

How didst thou, in thy infinite mercy, labour, weep, pray, and suffer for me? thy head was crowned with thorns for me; thy side was opened, thy arms stretched on a cross to receive me. To thee I fly, my only refuge.

O Jesus! by thy bitter agony and pains, by thy sacred death, have mercy on me. Holy eyes, once shut by death for me, look on me. Sacred hands, bless and defend me. Adorable side, laid open for me, receive me. Divine arms, stretched out by love, admit me to thy embraces. Precious blood, wash me; holy wounds, be so many mouths calling for mercy on me. Enter not into judgment with me, merciful Redeemer. My sins overwhelm me with confusion and dread; but, as you pardoned the penitent thief on the cross, so pardon me. One drop of thy precious blood is sufficient to wash away the sins of ten thousand worlds. May it efface my grievous offences. I commend myself to you, who have the keys of life and death. I cost you too dear; reject me not.

My sins, O God! are so grievous, that no creature can satisfy for them, or even comprehend their malice; but thy only Son, Jesus, pleads for my pardon on his cross; he interposes his sufferings between them and thy justice. Behold his gaping wounds, behold the anguish of his heart for me, and for his sake show me mercy and pardon.

"Remember, O merciful Jesus! that I am the cause of thy sufferings: suffer me not to be lost on that day."*

9. Especially in his agony, or under violent pains, let him often repeat: Sweetest Jesus, remember the anguish of thy divine heart in the garden, when thou receivedst comfort from an angel, and on the cross, when thou criedst out: Why hast thou forsaken me? Thou sufferedst all this for me. Thou, under that bitter agony, prayedst with a loud voice and tears for me, and thou wast heard for thy reverence. Suffer me not to deprive myself

* Recordare, Jesu pie, quod sim causa tuæ viæ. Ne me perdas illa die.

of the effect of this mercy. Say to me as thou didst to the good thief: This day shalt thou be with me in paradise. In union with thy commendation of thy spirit into the hands of thy eternal Father, grant me to say truly: Into thy hands I commend my spirit. Lord Jesus, receive my soul. Angels and saints condescend to meet me; present me before the throne of God. Now, whilst time is, intercede for me, and procure for me perfect repentance and love.

My soul, look up to heaven, where God reigns with his saints in glory. There is no more sorrow or pain; no more anxiety or danger; but all joy, peace, and security; the angels, the patriarchs, the apostles, and martyrs, inebriated with the plenty of God's house, expect me to be united within their happy troop. Come, Jesus, come; receive me into thy eternal tabernacles.

The soul must not forget to implore earnestly the intercession of the Mother of God, her angel guardian, patrons, and all the angels and saints. "Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us, sinners, now and in the hour of death. O refuge of sinners, and comforter of the afflicted! pray for me." And all ye saints, now secure of yourselves, be yet solicitous for me. "Holy angels, our guardians, defend us in the battle, that we perish not in the awful judgment."

With her last breath let her repeat: "I believe, I hope, I love. How sorry am I to have sinned!" and never cease repeating it, at least in her heart, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. Remember, O Redeemer! your anguish and agony in the garden and on the cross; unite mine to your sacred agony and death, sanctify and strengthen me by yours; receive my soul, as you commended yourself into the hands of your heavenly Father.

10. Persons in their last moments are often exposed to temptations. The devil, using his utmost efforts to ruin them, "cometh down, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time."—Apoc. xii. 12. If the sick person be assaulted with impatience under pains, or at the sight of death, let his principal entertainment be on the passion of Christ, begging by it holy patience and entire resignation. The remembrance of it is a wonderful charm to allay any pains or grief; and Jesus is always sensibly present with those who suffer with him.

He must draw aspirations of patience and resignation also from the reflections that impatience is unprofitable, increases sufferings, destroys their merit, and offends God; that God, the most tender Father, and most skilful physician, sends all for his good;

that sufferings wash away the rust of sin, and appease the divine justice, and though severe, are still far lighter than the sufferings of the world to come. See the acts of patience and resignation above.

Against an inordinate love of life and fear of death, let him excite his affections from the necessity of dying; the evils and dangers of life; the goodness of God, and the motives for submitting to his will; his paternal Providence over wife, children, &c.; his readiness to forgive all sin in a moment, in case of true repentance, which a longer life would not render more certain. Let him, then, commend and leave all his concerns to God, accept his will with joy, beg the pardon of his sins with confidence in God's mercy, and in humility offer up his death, in union with Christ's, as a sacrifice of expiation.

Under violent pains, let him repeat: "Jesus, mercy! Remove from me thy stripes. I will fear no evils, because thou art with me."

11. If he be molested with importunate temptations against faith, he must be sure never to reason or dispute with them; but quietly and firmly to oppose the enemy by an act of faith, in believing all that God has revealed and his Church teaches, resting in the testimony of God sealed with the undoubted marks of his word, and with the blood of innumerable martyrs.

If he be assaulted with despair, it must be examined well, whether some secret impenitence, refusal of restitution, or the like, be the cause; and this must be removed. Then diffidence and pusillanimity must be expelled by aspirations of confidence from the mercies and love of God, his promises of pardon, the passion of Christ, and the examples of the great sinners raised to be eminent saints; so far does God forget the past after true repentance. If scruples disturb him, he must bring himself to humble submission and obedience with a holy confidence.

If his danger consist in presumption and a spiritual insensibility, he must awaken himself, by acts of contrition, at the sight of his sins, and of a fear of God's judgments. "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, because no living creature shall be justified. If the just man shall with difficulty be saved, what shall become of the wicked sinner? From my hidden sins," &c.

The stars are not pure in thy sight; how shall I appear before thee? The saints tremble; what must I do? "Who knows if God will turn to us, and give us a blessing?"—Joel, ii.

If sloth be his malady, let him spur himself on by frequent and earnest ejaculations of fear and compunction.

12. A criminal, under sentence of death, must be encouraged to resignation by considering that it is a great mercy and benefit of God, affording him an easy means of expiating his offences, and repairing scandal; the most happy kind of death, not sudden and unforeseen; less painful than generally in violent sickness; also giving an opportunity of the best preparation and of greater merit by submitting to it with patience and resignation. He must meditate on the example of Christ and the bitterness of his death, without dwelling on the circumstances of his own. Neither let him take too formal leave of his friends, nor even see those whose company might excite indecent grief. His preparation for death may be gathered from above; let his time be taken up in exercises of repentance and divine love. At the execution he would be his own self-murderer, if he did anything which might directly hasten his death, as by fitting the rope, &c., but he is obliged to obey the proper officers in those things which only remotely lead him to death, as by going, when ordered, to the place of execution. He must be careful to injure no one's reputation, to repair scandals given, and sincerely to forgive and love all persons.

13. When any person is dying, let a crucifix be left near him, and often presented to him; also holy water, which, by the prayers of the Church, contains a blessing against evil spirits, and has been the instrument of many miracles, as we read in the lives of several saints. Let everything be removed out of the room which might excite human affections, or hinder the preparation of his soul. On this account let not wife, children, or other persons, whose sight might disturb his mind, be too freely allowed to approach him. Let him be often recommended to the prayers of the faithful and of the Church, and assisted by alms and other such spiritual helps.

As the last moments of a man's life are the most precious, and of infinite importance, inasmuch as his eternity depends on them, let all who are his friends show themselves in those moments to be truly friends, and employ themselves by fervent prayer, and sometimes by his side, to procure for him God's powerful graces. A few prayers before death will be much more beneficial to him than many after death. By procuring for him the grace of perfect contrition, they may preserve him from hell, or even from purgatory, and prepare him for higher glory. Let them, also,

show their charity by suggesting to him proper ejaculations to help him in forming suitable acts of virtue. If he be able to bear it without fatiguing his head, they may recite longer prayers near him, as the penitential psalms, litanies, prayers on the passion of our Saviour, such as those called St. Bridget's, or those of Gother for the approaches of death (p. 209), the Pater and Ave, leisurely, with pauses during his agony, or before it, when he seems in immediate danger; they ought to repeat by his side the prayers of the Church for the recommendation of the soul; if in Latin, which he may not understand, they should be often interrupted to entertain his devotion by suggesting certain pious aspirations. A blessed candle is put into his hand, in his agony, or placed lighted before him, as an emblem of the light of faith in which he dies, and of the light of glory to which he is passing.

14. The parish church-yard is the proper burying place of Christians, being blessed by a special benediction for that purpose. The ancient heathens everywhere forbade severely all burials within cities; doubtless that the infection might not corrupt the air, as is lately made manifest by fatal experience that it does. The Christians, when peace was restored to the Church, buried the martyrs in the churches for honour's sake. Others desiring to be laid near their reliques, church-yards were placed in towns to serve as the common burying-places of Christians. Hence, St. Chrysostom writes (Hom. 26. in 1 Cor.): "That emperors esteemed it an honour that they might be buried near the porches of the apostles, and kings to be made porters of fishermen." Many canons forbid any to be interred in churches, an honour reserved only to the bodies of saints and martyrs. See l. 1, Capital. cap. 158, and l. 2, c. 18, and Can. 15, causa 13, qu. 2. Near great churches were built cloisters or large porticos for more honourable burying-places for persons of distinction, as we still see in the Campo Santo at Pisa, in the great portico at the cathedral of Vienna, in Dauphiny, and in many other places. In the ninth century persons of eminent sanctity were, by the bishop's concession, interred within the churches, which custom continued to extend until it became a grievous abuse. Of this several Councils have complained; such as that of Rouen, A.D. 1581, of Rheims, A.D. 1583, &c. It is now become general by prescription in some countries. Nevertheless it is still more conformable to the spirit of the Church, as well as to the ancient canons, that Christians should be buried in the church-yard, rather

than in the church; and some divines affirm this to be more beneficial to their souls; for only the church-yard, not the church, is blessed for this end, of which no mention is made in the consecration of a church. In the missals we also find prayers for the dead in the parish, expressing only all who are buried in the church-yard, and not directed for any in the church. Therefore, though burials are free, yet, when the choice can be made, this seems the more advisable.

15. It is very repugnant to the humility and simplicity of religion, that funerals should be made a subject of pride, pomp, and extravagance; and mourning converted into a ridiculous, ill-placed ostentation. A true Christian will rather apply such expenses to the relief of the poor than to the gratification of such idle vanity. A decency, indeed, must be observed; but even this is rather a comfort of the living than of any advantage to the deceased, as St. Augustine observes, l. de Cur. pro Mort. It is, however, a duty of respect, which we owe to the memory of friends, and an act of charity, thus to bury the dead, according to the rules of simplicity adapted to such a ceremony. But, our chief care ought to be to procure the suffrages of the Church, and the prayers of the poor, for their or our own spiritual relief.

16. It is a supine and criminal neglect to defer making our preparation for death to the last, which ought to be the study of our whole lives. The Emperor Charles V., having renounced his worldly crown and concerns, to employ his last years in retirement in a monastery, had all the ceremonies of his obsequies performed before his own eyes, and assisted at them to put himself into more lively dispositions for a happy death. Several devout Christians make a retreat of three days in the month, or three or seven days in the year for this purpose. On the first day, *e. g.*, they meditate on the certainty and uncertainty of death; on the second, on a good and bad death, and in imagination take leave of friends, and all this world, as if now in their last sickness and at the point of death. In the mean time they prepare for confession as if to be the last in their lives, which they make on the third day; on the fourth prepare for communion as if for their viaticum; and receive it on the fifth; then enter into the preparation and dispositions for extreme unction; on the sixth, perform the last devotions as if in their agony. All this while they exercise their souls in acts of faith, hope, and especially of resignation, divine charity, sacrifice of themselves,

and the most perfect repentance. The last day they employ to obtain the grace of a happy death, and always to live with their house in order, and in a readiness for it; and endeavour to inflame themselves with a desire of praising God perfectly in heaven to supply all their defects with regard to this point on earth. They take care to beg his grace in all their devout prayers, and to implore the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and all the saints.

THE END.

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